### THE

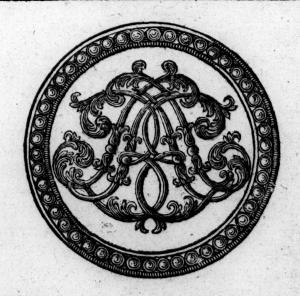
# Bishop of LONDON's Three Pastoral Letters

To the PEOPLE of his DIOCESE;

Particularly to those of the two Great Cities of London and Westminster.

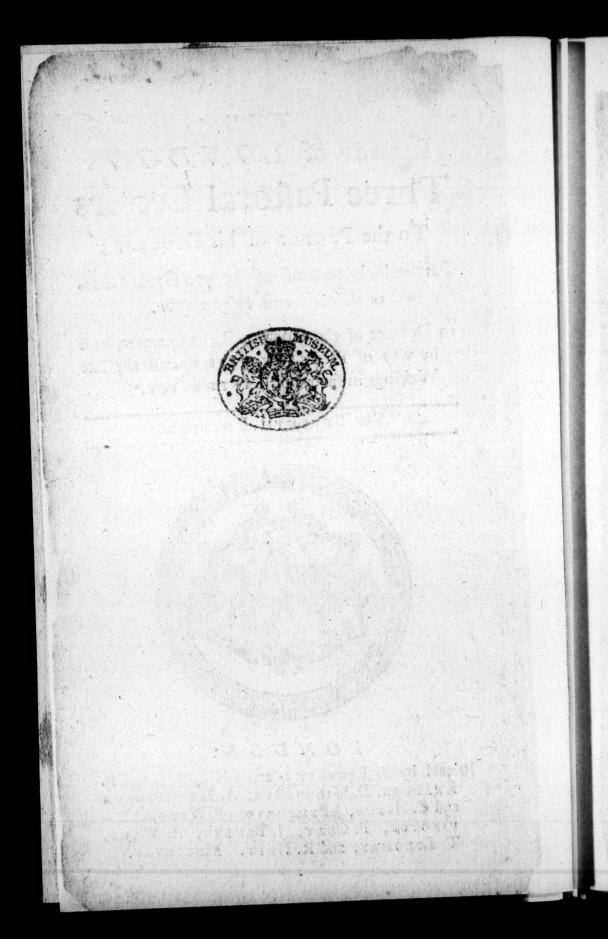
In Defence of the Gospel-Revelation, and by way of Preservative against the late Writings in favour of Infidelity.

The SEVENTH EDITION.



### LONDON:

Printed by S. Buckley; and fold by J. J. and P. Knapton, D. Midwinter, A. Bettesworth and C. Hitch, J. Pemberton, R. Ware, C. Rivington, F. Clay, J. Batley, A. Ward, T. Longman, and R. Hett. Mcccxxxv.



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## The Bishop of London's

## PASTORAL LETTER

To the People of his Diocese;

Particularly, to those of the two Great Cities of London and Westminster.

Occasion'd by some late Writings in Favour of INFIDELITY.

HE Office I bear in the Church of Christ, and my particular Relation to this Diocese, oblige me to study your Spiritual Good, and to warn you of any Danger to which I see you expos'd, either in Principle or Practice. For tho' you are committed, as to your Spiritual Affairs, to the more immediate A 5

Care and Direction of Parochial Ministers, yet not so, as to cease to be a Part of the Episcopal Care, especially in Cases where the Concern is general, and the Dangers such as may not fall under the Observation of every particular Pastor. And I am not without Hope, that what I shall say to you, will be more generally attended to, and make an Impression somewhat stronger, as it comes to you directly from the Hands of your Bishop; and, being not spoken, but written, you will have better Opportunity to peruse, consider, and apply it, with such Care and Deliberation as the Importance of the Matter deserves.

This Method, I own, is uncommon, but so is the Occasion too; and no where so great and pressing, as in these two large and populous Cities; whether we consider the Variety of Temptations, or the powerful Influence of bad Examples; the corrupt Principles and Practices which first spring up here, or the quick and easy Propagation of them from hence into all Parts of the Kingdom; which makes the checking and suppressing them here as much as possible, to be trely a National Concern.

They who live in these great Cities, or have had frequent recourse to them, and have any Concern for Religion, must have observ'd to their great Grief, ' That Prophaneness and Impiety are grown bold and open; 'That a new fort of Vice of a very horrible nature, and almost unknown before in these parts of the World, was springing up and gaining ground among us, if it had not been check'd by the feafonable Care of the Civil Administration; 'That in some late Writings, Publick Stews have been openly vindicated, and Publick Vices recommended to the Protection of the Government, as Publick Benefits; and, 'That great Pains have been taken to make Meneasy in their Vices, and to deliver them from the Restraints of Conscience, by undermining all Religion, and promoting Atheism and Infidelity; and what adds to the Danger, by doing it under specious Colours and Pretences of feveral kinds. One, under presence of opposing the Encroachments of Popery, thereby to recommend himself to the unwary Protestant Reader, has labour'd at once to fet aside all Christian Ordinances, and the very A 6 Being

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Being of a Christian Ministry, and a Christian Church; Another, under colour of great zeal for the Jewish Dispensation, and the literal Meaning of Scripture, has been endeavouring to overthrow the Foundations of the Christian Religion; A third, pretending to raise the Actions and Miracles of our Saviour to a more exalted and spiritual Meaning, has labour'd to take away the Reality of them, and by that to destroy one of the principal Evidences of Christianity. Others have shewn a great zeal for Natural Religion in opposition to Reyeal'd, with no other view, as it feems, than to get rid of the Restraints of Reveal'd Religion, and to make way for unbounded Enjoyment of their corrupt Appetites and vicious Inclinations, no less contrary in reality to the Obligations of Natural Religion, than of Reveal'd. And all or most of these Writers, under colour of pleading for the Liberties of Mankind, have run into an unprecedented Licentiousness, in treating the ferious and important Concerns of Religion, in a ludicrous and reproachful manner.

These are things, which no serious Christian, I might add, no serious Deist who has any fenfe of God upon his Mind, and any regard to Virtue and Morality, or even to common Decency and Order, can behold and reflect on, without a very fenfible Concern. Much more ought the Ministers of the Gospel to be awake, and to double their Care over the Souls committed to their Charge, when they fee fo many Devices fet on Foot to corrupt and poison them, both in their Principles and Morals. Accordingly, on this Occasion. many excellent Books have been published in Defence of the Christian Religion, against those Writings in Favour of Infidelity. In which Books, the Authors have with great Learning, Strength and Perspicuity, maintain'd the Cause of Religion, and detected the Sophistry of its Adversaries; whose Art it has been, in some Cases, to lay hold on little Circumstances, as if the whole of Christianity depended upon them, and by that to draw the Reader's Attention from the most plain and substantial Arguments for the Truth of it; and at other times, by perplexing and misapplying the plainest Proofs.

Proofs, to make way for their own Interpretations, and for imposing them more eafily upon unwary and ignorant Readers; and, which is no less unfair and disingenuous, to misrepresent the Sense of judicious Writers, and to pick weak Arguments out of those who are less guarded, in order to expose the whole as ridiculous. To defeat these indirect Arts and Endeavours, the same learned Writers have taken off those false Colours, and placed the Evidences of Christianity upon their true Foundation; and, by fetting them in their proper and genuin Light, and reprefenting them in their united Strength, have abundantly shewn that no impartial and unprejudic'd Person who considers them with Attention, can doubt of their Force and Sufficiency to convince any reasonable and well-disposed Mind.

But because these Writings are too large and too learned, to be read and examined by the generality of People; and consist of such a Chain of Reasoning, as Persons of common Capacity cannot easily follow and comprehend; who, as they have less Leisure as well as Ability to enter into

into particular Examinations, are more liable to be imposed upon, and more like
to be attack'd by the Enemies of Christianity: For this Reason, I have thought it
incumbent upon me, to draw up for your
Use some few Rules and Cautions, which
are short and easy, and which being frequently perused, and duly attended to, may
be a Means, under the Blessing of God, to
preserve singere and unprejudic'd Christians
from these dangerous Insections.

I. Be sure that you have a Mind fincerely defirous to know the Will of God, and firmly refolved to comply with whatever shall appear to be his Will. This is a neceffary Preparation for the Knowledge of Divine Truths, 'To be willing to know, and ready to practife; without which, Men not only may be easily deceived by others. but are in effect determin'd beforehand to deceive themfelves. Where there is an Unwillingness to part with Lusts and Pleafures and worldly Interests, there must of course be a Desire that the Christian Religion should not be true, and a Willingness to favour and embrace any Argument that is brought against it, and to cherish any

any Doubts and Scruples that shall be raised concerning it. From a Mind fo disposed and so prejudiced in Favour of the Enemy, Christianity cannot expect a fair Hearing, but on the contrary all the difadvantage and opposition that Lusts and Passions can fuggest. And therefore our Saviour lays down this as the true Foundation of Divine Knowledge, If any Man will do God's Will, he shall know of the Dostrine, whether it be of God; implying, that a fincere Defire to know the Truth, with an honest Disposition to conform our Wills and Affections to it when known, is the best Preservative against Error in Religion, and carries with it a well grounded affurance of the Divine Aid, to affift Persons fo dispos'd in their Enquiries after Truth. And the Words do also carry in them this other Affertion, That whoever is not first fincerely disposed to do the Will of God, he shall be in great danger of not knowing the Doctrine whether it be of God, and of remaining in a State of Ignorance and Error. The same and man block

L John vii. 17.

II. As a farther proof of your Sincerity, be careful and diligent in the use of those Means which God has afforded you for the right understanding of his Will: Particularly, in reading the Scriptures, and making them familiar to you, and comparing one Part of them with another; by which a modepate Capacity may make confiderable Advancement in the Knowledge of Religion. And you must not fail to pray to God, that in all your Searches and Enquiries after the Truth, he will be pleas'd to guide and direct you by his Holy Spirit; which he is always ready to vouchfafe to every humble and fincere Mind. And if after all your own Endeavours, you meet with difficulties of any kind, have recourse to some Perfons of Piety and Learning, upon whose Knowledge and Judgment you believe you may fafely rely. Only beware, that the Difficulties be not owing, either to a Willingness on your part to raise them, or to the indulging yourfelves in over curious and needless Enquiries.

III. After you have secur'd the Sincerity of your own Hearts, attend to the Lives of those who endeavour to feduce you, or whom

you see endeavouring to seduce others: Whether, in the general Course of them, they have been sober and regular, and virtuous; or, on the contrary, vicious and irregular. If the latter; do not wonder that they take fo much Pains to reason themselves into Infidelity, without which their Minds cannot be easy in the Enjoyment of their Vices; nor that they become Advocates for it, and are industrious to gain Profelytes, on purpose to keep themselves in countenance, and to make their Vices less infamous, by being more fashionable. Take it for granted, that such Men are Enemies to Religion, for no other Reason, but because Religion is an Enemy to their Luxury and Lusts. For, as it has been already obferved under the first Head, that a Mind virtuoufly dispos'd and sincerely desirous to understand the Will of God, is the best Preparation for the Knowledge of the Truth; so is a vicious Mind and a Willinguess and Inclination to disbelieve, the natural and necessary Parent of Error and Delusion.

And as some are naturally led by their Lusts, to oppose the Doctrines of Christianity;

anity; fo others are led by Pride and Selfconceit, to raise Doubts and Disputes concerning any Opinions and Doctrines which are generally receiv'd and establish'd, how evident soever it may be, that the Doctrines they oppose are agreeable to all the Principles of Virtue in general, and of Christianity in particular. Such Men disdain to think in the common way; and valuing themselves upon a more than ordinary Share of Knowledge and Penetration, doalways affect Novelty and Singularity in Opinion. Which opposing Humour was well express'd by one of our modern Advocates for Infidelity, in what he is reported to have faid of one of his Fellowlabourers to this Effect, 'That if his own Opinions were established to-day, he would oppose them to morrow.' When therefore you observe any Person to be eager and forward in raising Doubts and Scruples about the Doctrines of Christianity, who also on other Occasions appears to take a Delight in disputing and wrangling, and opposing the general Sentiments of Mankind; wonder not at it, but place it, as you well may, to the account of Pride and Self-conceit; and o sudy

and the natural Effects of these, a Spirit of Contradiction.

IV. When you meet with any Book upon the Subject of Religion, that is written in a ludicrous or unserious manner; take it for granted that it proceeds from a deprav'd Mind, and is written with an irreligious Defign. Such Books are calculated not to inform the Understanding, but to corrupt the Heart. There is no Subject, how grave or sublime soever in itself, but may be turn'd into Jest and Ridicule; and by being so turn'd may be made to appear mean and despicable. And the Promoters of Infidelity very well know, that if by this Artifice they can take off the Reverence that belongs to Religion, the Minds of the People are eafily carried into a Difregard of it, and an Indifference about it; which is of course an Inlett to Vice; and Vice quickly improves an Indifference about Religion, into a Prejudice against it, and by degrees into a profess'd Enmity to it. Be fure therefore to avoid this Snare; and do not only lay afide, but abhor all fuch Books as turn Religion into Jest and Mirth: For, next to the writing and publishing them, 种业人 there

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there is not a more certain Sign of a depraved and irreligious Mind, than the finding any degree of Satisfaction and Complacency in them.

V. Be not persuaded to part with Revelation under pretence of relying on Natural Reason as your only Guide. For Reason. without the Affistance given it by Revelation, has in fact appeared to be a very infufficient Guide. For which we may appeal to the endless and irreconcileable differences among the ancient Philosophers, not only in Speculative Opinions, but in the great Rules of Duty, as to what is right or wrong, lawful or unlawful; and even in the chief End or Good which Man ought to propose to himself in order to his Happiness. And it would be very strange, to suppose that the generality of Mankind have sufficient loisure and ability to enter into the depths of Philosophy, and to compare the Opinions of the feveral Philofophers, and to determine, upon the Foot of natural Reason, which of them is in the right and which in the wrong. And much more extraordinary would it be to expect, that for the fake of such an uncertain and impracticable

impracticable Rule, they should lay aside a plain, clear and uniform Scheme of Duty, obvious to the meanest Capacities, and

fully attested to come from God.

But suppose the Philosophers had furnished us with a confistent and uniform Scheme of moral Duties, which they are very far from having done; there are many other things that Revelation has discovered to us, which were either wholly unknown, or known very imperfectly to the best and wifest among them, and yet are abfolutely necessary to give Mankind a full Knowledge of their Duty, and to make them proceed in it with Comfort and Constancy. Such are, 'The way in which an acceptable Worship may be perform'd to the Deity; 'The certain Method of obtaining Pardon of Sin, and Reconciliation to God, and supernatural Affistance to enable us to do his Will: and, 'That most powerful motive to Duty and Obedience, the full Assurance of Rewards and Punishments in another Life, according to our behaviour in this; without a firm persuafion of which (much firmer than any Philofopher ever arriv'd to) it is morally impossible

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ble that Mankind, in this corrupt State, should be restrained from Excess and Violence, and preserved in a regular and or-

derly course of Duty.

But the Truth is, Natural Religion, as fet up against Revelation by our present Advocates for Infidelity, is very different from that which the wifest of the ancient Philosophers discover'd by the light of Reason; and this in some very material Points. With the one, the Government of the Appetites was their great Foundation of Virtue and Goodness; but with the other, the great aim feems to be to gratify them; and fo, their main objection against Christianity must be, that it requires Selfdenial, and lays Restraints upon the irregular Appetites of Mankind. The ancient Moralists labour'd by all the Arguments they could find, to give themselves what they thought a comfortable Hope of the Immortality of the Soul and a future State; but there is too much cause to believe, that our modern Reasoners do not wish or desire that these things may be true; on the contrary, the great aim of all their Endeavours seems to be, to root the apprehenlion

hension of them out of the World. The wifest and most learned of the Philosophers of old, faw and lamented their own Ignorance, and the Imperfection of the utmost Knowledge that Natural Reason can attain to, and the great Necessity there was of fome further Light. But our modern Philosophers are self-sufficient, so far from defiring further Light of any kind, that it is one part of their Character to disclaim 'all Assistance, even though it be from a divine Revelation. The Ancients preferv'd the greatest Reverence for things Sacred; but their pretended Successors in our Times, turn every thing that is Sacred into Jest and Ridicule. So that, Natural Religion, as now contended for among us, feems not to be meant for a Rule of Duty, but only a specious Name, to be set up against Revelation, and to prove Christianity, not only as to the dostrinal, but even, the moral part of it, to be a needless Institution. And certainly there cannot be a greater Sign of a perverse and deprav'd Mind, than the endeavouring to depreciate it; 'As it is an Institution, that contains in it the Religion of Nature explain'd, improv'd, and

and rais'd to greater degrees of Purity and Perfection; (regulating the inward Thoughts as well as the outward Actions; requiring us to abstain not only from Sin, but from all Tendencies to it; not only from Evil, but from all appearance of Evil; commanding us to love and do good to our Enemies as well as Friends; and enforcing the strict observance both of Moral and Christian Duties, by Motives and Obligations stronger by far, than any that Natural Reafon can suggest;) 'As it lays down a plain and easy Rule of Life, adapted to the meanest as well as the highest Capacities; ' As the Precepts of it are excellently calculated for the Peace and Happiness of Mankind, by laying the strongest restraints upon their irregular Passions (Anger, Hatred, and Revenge,) and every where inculcating the most amiable Lessons of Meekness, Benevolence, and Forgiveness; 'As it requires and enforces a strict Observance of the Duties belonging to the feveral Relations of Mankind to one another, on which the Peace and Order not only of private Families, but of publick Societies, fo greatly depend; ' As it furnishes us with the best

ments for Comfort in the time of Affliction, and enables us to bear all the Evils of this Life with Patience and Contentment; and finally, 'As it opens to us a most comfortable view of Happiness and Immortative in a future State. How such an Institution should become the object of their Hatred and Dislike, is not to be accounted for, but from somewhat very corrupt and irregular in their Hearts; which makes them first averse to the Purity it requires, and, for the sake of that, profess'd Enemies. to the Institution it self.

VI. Do not reckon the Truth of any Difpensation or Dostrine to be really Doubtful,
merely because some Men affest to make a
Doubt of it. There are Monsters in Mind,
as well as in Body; and it is an old Observation, that there was no Opinion so absurd, but what some Philosopher had held.
The truth is, Follies and Absurdities in
Opinion are without end, where Men give
themselves up to Scepticism, and at the same
time are positive and conceited, and afraid
that they shall not sufficiently distinguish
themselves, and transmit their Names to
Posterity

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Posterity with advantage, but by broaching odd and fingular Notions, and by thinking differently from the generality of Mankind; which leads them of course to oppose whatever is generally receiv'd and establish'd. And when the Doctrines which they fet themselves to overthrow, are such as curb and cross the corrupt and inordinate Defires of Nature, and their own Doctrines come recommended by giving full Liberty and Indulgence to the irregular Appetites of Men, and by lessening their Apprehensions of a future Account, it is not to be wonder'd that they gain Proselytes.

VII. When a Revelation is sufficiently attested to come from God, let it not weaken your Faith, if you cannot clearly see the Fitness and Expedience of every part of it. This would be, to make your felves as knowing as God; whose Wisdom is infinite, and the Depth of whose Dispensations, with the Reasons and Ends of them, are not to be fathom'd by our short and narrow Comprehensions. God has given us sufficient Capacity to know him, and to learn our Duty, and to judge when a Revelation comes from him; which is all the Knowledge that is

needful to us in our present State. And it is the greatest Folly as well as Presumption in any Man, to enter into the Counsels of God, and to make himself a Judge of the Wisdom of his Dispensations to such a Degree, as to conclude that this or that Revelation cannot come from God, because he cannot see in every Respect the Fitness and Reasonableness of it: to say, for Instance, that either we had no need of a Redeemer. or that a better Method might have been contriv'd for our Redemption; and upon the whole, not to give God leave to fave us in his own Way. In these Cases, the true Inference is, that the Revelation is therefore wife, and good, and just, and fit to be receiv'd and submitted to by us, because we have sufficient Reason to believe that it comes from God. For fo far he has made us competent Judges, inasmuch as Natural Reason informs us what are the proper Evidences of a Divine Revelation; but he has not let us into the Springs of his Administration, nor shewn us the whole Compais of it, nor the Connexion of the feveral Parts with one another; nor, by Consequence, can we be capable to judge adequately

adequately of the Fitness of the Means which he makes use of to attain the Ends. On the contrary, the attempting to make fuch a Judgment, is to fet our felves in the Place of God, and to forget that we are frail Men; that is, short-sighted and ignorant Creatures, who know very little of divine Matters, further than it has pleas'd God to reveal them to us.

VIII. Suffer not your selves to be drawn from the more plain and direct Proofs of the Truth of Christianity, to Proofs, which however good, are less obvious to common Capacities. This is an Artifice usual with Writers who engage in a bad Cause; to labour, in the first Place, to fix the Merits of the Cause they oppose, upon some Point which has either little Relation to it, or at least is not the main Point; and then to run into fuch Proofs as are most remote and intricate; and both thefe, on purpose to draw the Reader's Attention from the true State of the Case, and from the Proofs which are most plain, strong and direct. There are many Sorts of Proofs, by which the Truth of Christianity is supported; as 1, Types, 2, PROPHECIES. 3, The GENERAL Ex-

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PECTATION of Christ's coming at that time. 4. The MIRACLES he wrought. 5. His PREDICTIONS of his own Death, and Resurrection, and of many other Events, which were punctually fulfill'd: and 6, The fpeedy and wonderful Propagation of the Gospel, after his Death. But all thefe, tho' in themselves cogent and conclusive, are not equally plain and clear to

every Capacity.

1. The Types which the Christian Writers of all Ages have infifted on, as prefiguring a suffering Saviour, could not be applied to Christ by the Jews who lived before his coming, because they expected a temporal Prince and a triumphant Saviour; but they are expresly applied to him. and represented as centring in him, by the Inspir'd Writers of the New Testament, and particularly by St. Paul, who receiv'd his Instructions immediately from Heaven. The Paschal Lamb, for Instance, which was flain every Year at the Feast of the Paffover, and was by God's special Appointment to be ' without Blemish, and to be flain only at 2 Ferusalem, and the 3 Bones Exod. xii. 5. 2 Deut. xvi. 5, 6. 3 Exod. xii. 46.

Numb. ix. 12.

of it not to be broken; was most manifestly a Type of our Saviour's Death; which, befides an Agreement in the Circumstances already mention'd, was on the very fame Day, and on the very same part of the Day, that the Paschal Lamb was appointed to be flain; and, by a fignal Providence, a Bone of him was not broken; though it was a known Cuftom to break the Bones of those who were crucified, and the Bones of the two who were crucified with him were actually broken. Well then might John the Baptist say to the People, ' Behold the Lamb of God; and St. Paul style him, \* Christ our Passover; and St. Peter speak of him, 3 as of a Lamb without blemish and without foot.

2. In like manner, the PROPHECIES of the Old Testament, as foretelling the Time, Place, and other Circumstances of the Birth, Life, Death, and Resurrection of the Messiah, with many particulars concerning the Nature of his Kingdom, and the Times of it, are not only applied to him by the Inspired Writers of the New

F John i. 29. 2 1 Cor. v. 7. 3 1 Pet. i. 19: 1

B 4 Testament,

Testament, and by the succeeding Christians in all Ages, but were so applied by the ancient Jewish Writers themselves, long before the coming of Christ into the World. From whence arose that general Expestation of his coming at that Time, which we find attested by the concurring Evidence of Jewish, Christian, and Heathen Writers.

That a Messiah was promised in the Law and the Prophets, and that this was univerfally believ'd and acknowledg'd by the Fews, appears by the whole Tenor of St. Paul's and St. Peter's Discourses to them, as they are recorded in the Acts of the Apoftles. Where we fee plainly, the only Point in Dispute between them and the Jews was, Whether or no that Promise was fulfill'd in our Saviour? For as the Apostles constantly reason'd with them from the Prophecies and Predictions of the Old Teftament, fo all their Reasonings were to prove, that they were fulfill'd in him. We do not find, that any Doubt was rais'd by the Jews whether the Passages quoted from those Books, had been rightly applied to a Messiah by their own Teachers, or whether the Expectation there was of a great Deliverer,

Deliverer, was well founded in the Scriptures; the only Thing, which the Jews themselves being Judges, wanted to be prov'd, was, that those Scriptures were rightly applied by the Apostles to Jesus of Nazareth, whom their Rulers had put to death, but who by the Power of God was rais'd again to Life; of which the Apostles were Eye-witnesses, and the Truth of their Testimony was confirm'd by the miraculous Gifts and Powers of the Holy Ghost. This was the great Point in their Reasonings with the Jews, 'To prove that Telus was the Person promis'd; for which they made their Appeals to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and did it with great Success. At Thessalonica, where was a Synagogue of the Jews, St. Paul went in unto them, as his manner was, and three Sabbath-days reason'd with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alledging, that Christ must needs have suffer'd and risen again from the dead, and that this Jesus whom I preach unto you, is Christ. At 2 Damascus he confounded the Jews which dwelt there, proving that this is the very Christ. So, Acts xvii. 1, 2, 3. Acts ix. 22.

in the Synagogue at ' Beræa, he reason'd with them out of the Scriptures; and it is faid in commendation of the Jews there, that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and fearch'd the Scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Of the same kind was his Discourse with the Fews at Antioch; Of this man's (David's) Seed, bath God, according to his Promise, rais'd unto Ifrael, a Saviour, Jesus: - Because they knew bim not (viz. Christ,) nor yet the voices of the Prophets which are read every Sabbatkday, they have fulfill'd them in condemning bim-The Promise which was made unto the Fathers, God bath fulfill'd the same to us their Children, in that he hath rais'd up. Fefus again; according to what was prophefied by David and Isaiah, which is there fet forthat large. Thusalfo he defends himfelf before Felix, 3 This I confess unto thee, that after the way which they call Herefy. so worship I the God of my Fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and the Prophets: and before Festus and Agrippa, 4 I am judged for the hope of the Promise

Acts xvii. 10, 11, 12. Acts xiii. 16, 17, 23, 27, 32, 33. Acts xxiv. 14. Acts xxvi. 6, 22, 27, 28. made

## PASTORAL LETTER. 2

ing obtain'd belp of God, I continue unto this day; witnessing both to small and great, saying none other things, than those which the Prophets and Moses did say should come—King Agrippa, believest thou the Prophets? I know that thou believest; To which Agrippa replied, Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian. And when he was at Rome, he explained and testissed to the Jews who came to him, the kingdom of God; persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the Law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, from morning 'till evening.

The Acts of the Apostles give the like Account of St. 2 Peter, who on the Day of Pentecost preach'd to the Jews upon the Evidence of the Scriptures, with such Success, that great numbers gladly received his word, and the same day there were added to them about three thousand Souls. And a little after, upon his healing an impotent Manin 3 Solomon's Porch, and the People's running together to him, we have another Declaration of his to the same purpose: Those

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<sup>#</sup> Acts xxviii. 23: # Acts ii. 1, 41. 3 Acts iii. 18, 21, 22, 24, 25, 26.

things which God beforehand had shewed by the mouth of all his Prophets, that Christ should suffer, be bath so fulfill'd. -Whom the Heaven must receive, until the time of Restitution of all things, which God bath spoken by the mouth of all his holy Prophets, fince the World began. For Moses truly said unto the Fathers, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you: Yea, and all the Prophets from Samuel, and those that follow after as many as bave spoken, bave likewise foretold of these Days .- And many which heard the Word, believed, and the number of the men was about five thousand. Again in his Speech to Cornelius, and his Company .- 2 Him (Jefus) God raised up -and commanded us to preach to the People, and to testifie, that it is he which was ordain'd of God, to be the Judge of quick and dead; to bim give all the Prophets witness.

The same Appeal to the Scriptures is made by St. Stephen: <sup>3</sup> This is that Moses, which said unto the children of Israel, A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you.—Which of the Prophets have not your Fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before af the coming of the just Acts iv. 4. <sup>2</sup> Acts x. 42, 43. <sup>3</sup> Acts vii. 37, 52.

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### PASTORAL LETTER.

One, of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers. And Philip converts the Treasurer of Queen Candace, whom he found reading the 53d Chapter of Isaiab, by beginning at that Scripture, and preaching to him Jesus; upon which he believ'd, and was baptiz'd. And of Apollos it is faid, that 2 be was an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures; and that he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publickly, shewing by the Scriptures, that Jesus was the Christ. This then was the Reasoning of the Apofiles, and other holy Men, in order to the Conversion of the Jews; and it is no other than what St. 3 Paul learnt by immediate Revelation; for he tells the Corintbians, that he delivered to them, that which be received, bow that Christ died for our fins according to the Scriptures, and that he was buried, and that be rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures; and the other Apostles were instructed in the same way of reasoning by our 4 Saviour himself, who a little before his Passion took to him the Twelve, and faid unto them, Behold,

Acts viii. 30, &c. 2 Acts xviii. 24, 28.

<sup>3 1</sup> Cor. xv. 3, 4.

<sup>4</sup> Luke xviii, 31, 34.

we go up to ferusalem, and all things that are written in the Prophets concerning the Son of Man, shall be accomplished. But then they understood none of these things; and therefore, after his Resurrection be open'd their understanding; first, of two of them, whomhe met going to Emmaus, " O fools, and flow of heart to believe all that the Prophetshave spoken; ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses, and all the Prophets, beexpounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himself: and then of the Eleven, \* These are the Words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were writtens in the Law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Pfalms, concerning me. Then opened be their understanding, that they might understand the Scriptures, and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that Repentance and Remission of Sins should be preached in his name among all Nations, and one is built box graleve Wads

<sup>\*</sup> Luke xxiv. 25, 26, 27. Luke xxiv. 44, 45, 46, 47. Such.

Such frequent Appeals to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, to prove that Jesus was the Messiah, plainly suppose the Promise of a Messiah; and the Success they had, notwithstanding the Prejudices the Jews were under against a Suffering Messiah, shews the propriety and essiancy of this Argument in order to the conviction of that People, to whom the Promise was made, and whose earnest desire and expessation of a Deliverer had led them of course to be familiarly acquainted with the Prophecies concerning him.

But because the Evidence arising from particular Types and Prophecies, is now by length of Time, and distance of Place, and change of Customs, become obscure and disticult to the generality of People, and cannot be thoroughly discussed without a great variety of knowledge concerning the ancient Jewish Customs, and the Authority of their Writings, and the exact Calculations of Time; All which require much Study, and leave Room to ill-minded Mento dispute and cavil, and to perplex Readers who are unacquainted with the Learning and History of former Ages: For these Reasons.

Reasons, the Promoters of Infidelity might well hope to find their Account in resting the whole Evidence of Christianity upon the Types and Prophecies of the Old Testament; partly to surnish wicked Minds with Objections, and fill weak Minds with Doubts; and partly to draw and divert Mankind from attending to the more plain, strong, and direct Evidences of the Truth of Christianity.

To avoid this Snare, fix your Mind stedfastly upon the Testimony of Fasts which are undeniable, and upon Consequences slowing from them, which are plain and obvi-

ous to the meanest Capacities.

3. As to the Facts contain'd in the New Testament; they have the sullest Testimony, that any ancient History can have:

'They are transmitted to us by Persons who were Eye-witnesses of them, or at least Contemporary with those that were so, of whom they had diligently enquir'd.

'Persons, to whom no Fraud, Insincerity, or Immorality of any kind, was ever objected: 'So sar from being suspected of Design or Contrivance, that they were despised both by Jew and Gentile, as simple and ignorant Men; 'Not mov'd by any Prospect

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Prospect of Riches, Honours, or other temporal Advantage, but on the contrary expos'd to continual Perfecutions upon the fingle Account of their giving Testimony to those Facts; in which, notwithstanding, they persevered to the last, and were ready to feal the Truth of their Testimony with their Blood, as we are affur'd feveral of them did. Nor can there be the leaft Doubt, whether those were the very Perfons who recorded the Facts as convey'd to us; fince we find the Books by which they have been convey'd, expresly ascrib'd to them, and frequently cited under their Names, by the Writers of the very next Age, and of every Age fince; and not only received as fuch by the feveral Christian Churches, but admitted both by Jews and Heathens in their Writings against Christianity. We also find, by the numerous Paffages which they cite from them, and by the early Translations of the Books themselves into several Languages, that they are the fame with those we now have; and are moreover affur'd, that the Original Writings of feveral of them were preferv'd for fome Ages, and frequently appeal'd to by the the Christians, in their Disputes with Hereticks. These are the known Evidences, to prove that any ancient Book, whether Sacred or Prophane, was really written by the Person whose Name it bears; and it appears by what has been said, that they may be applied with greater Strictness and Justice to the New Testament, than to any other ancient Writing what soever; particularly, in the point of so many Persons laying down their Lives, in Testimony of the Truth of the Doctrines and Facts contain'd in them.

4. As to the Consequences from those Facts, and the Application of them in order to satisfy your selves concerning the Truth of Christianity; begin with the GENERAL EXPECTATION there was of a Messiah or great Prophet and Deliverer, about the time that our Saviour came. And for the Proof of this, you need go no surther, than the Writings of the Evangelists: It is said of 'Simeon, a just and devout Man, that he was waiting for the Consolation of Israel. Anna the Prophetes spake of Jesus to all them that look'd for Redemption in Jerusalem. Upon the appearing of 'John the Baptist,

<sup>\*</sup> Luke ii. 25. 38. \* Luke iii. 15.

the People were in Expectation, and all men mused in their Hearts, whether he was the Christ, or not. The Message from John to Christ was, Art thou be that should come? The question put to John by the Priests and Levites was, 2 Art thou that Prophet? Andrew tells his Brother, 3 We have found the Messiah, i. e. the Christ. The People, feeing the Miracle of the Loaves, fay, 4 This is of a Truth, that Prophet that should come into the World. At another time it is faid by the People, 5 Of a truth, this is the Prophet: This is the Christ. The Woman of Samaria said, 6 I know that Messab cometh, which is called Christ. The People fay, Do the Rulers know indeed, that this is the very Christ? The Jews come about Jesus, and ask him, How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly. Martha faith to Jesus, & I believe that thou art Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the World. And the High-Priest adjures him to declare, Whether he was the Christ, the Son of God.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Mat. xi. 3. <sup>2</sup> Joh. i. 21. <sup>3</sup> John 1. 41. <sup>4</sup> John vi. 14. <sup>5</sup> John vii. 40, 41. <sup>6</sup> John iv. 25. <sup>7</sup> John x. 24. <sup>8</sup> John xi. 27. <sup>9</sup> Mat. xxvi. 63. There

These are Facts, which plainly shew that there was among the Jews at that Time a general Expettation of a Messiah; and this Expectation could arise from nothing but a known and general Agreement among them, that that was the Time which their Prophets had fixed for his coming. And even the Evasion of the Modern Jews, that two Messiahs were foretold, one Suffering, and the other Triumphant, is an Argument from the Mouth of an Adversary, that a Messiah which was foretold by their Prophets, is already come; inasmuch, as they find it impossible to apply many passages which their own Writers before the Coming of Christ expresly applied to the Messiah, to any person but a Messiah in a low and suffering Condition.

5. But let your chief Regard and Attention be to the Testimony of MIRACLES; those mighty Works which were wrought by Christ and his Apostles. For this is in its nature a more fure, plain and easy Proof; which the meanest Capacities are capable of apprehending and entring into; and which therefore was evidently intended to be the principal means of convincing all Mankind of the Truth of Christianity. To deny that our Saviour wrought many and great Miracles, on all Occasions, during the whole course of his Ministry, before Multitudes of People, in the Presence of Enemies as well as Friends, with a bare Word, and with real and permanent Effects, is to deny the Evidence of Sense, and to destroy at once the Truth of all History whatsoever: and in this Particular it is to deny that which the bitterest Enemies of Christianity of old had not the Hardness to deny. To say, (as the Jews did) that those Miracles were wrought by the Assistance of Evil Spirits, is to fall into the Absurdities with which our Saviour justly charges them, viz. 'That Satan casts out Satan: 'That a Person whose Life was most holy, and his Doctrine divine, pure and heavenly, was all the while carrying on the Work of the Devil; and, 'That a Preacher of Righteousness, Justice, Mercy, Charity, Truth, Meekness, Patience and Peace, could be enabled to work Miracles by any Power, but what was Divine.

And therefore we find, that Christ himself often appeals to his Works, or the Miracles wrought by him, as full and convincing Testimonies of his coming from God. For Instance, It is said of John the Baptist, that he wrought no Miracles; upon which our Saviour argues thus with the Feros: I have greater Witness than that of John; for the Works which the Father hath given me to finish, the same Works that I do, bear Witness of me that the Father bath sent me. At another Time, when the Jews came about him and faid, a How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly; his Answer was, I told you and ye believed not; the Works that I do in my Father's Name, they bear Witness of me; and again to the same effect, 3 If I do not the Works of my Father, believe me not; but if I do, tho' ye believe not me, believe the Works; and in another Place, 4 Believe me for the very Works Sake. And a little before his Ascension, he tells his Disciples, ' Ye shall receive Power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be Witnesses unto

John v. 36. <sup>2</sup> John x. 24, 25. <sup>3</sup> John x. 37, 38. <sup>4</sup> John xiv. 11. <sup>5</sup> Acts i. 8.

me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and to the utmost Parts of the Earth. Agreeably to which St. Mark tells us, that they went forth, and preached every where; the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following. And it is said in the Ass, that the Lord gave Testimony unto the Word of his Grace, (i. e. the Gospel) and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their hands. The Miracles they were enabled to work, were the proper and standing Evidences of the Truth of their Doctrine.

Nor does Christ only appeal to his Works; and enable his Apostles to do Signs and Wonders in order to the Propagation of the Gospel, but he grounds the great Guilt of the Jews who rejected him, on their having seen his Works, and yet not been convinced by them: 2 If I had not done among them the Works which none other Mandid, they had not had Sin: And elsewhere he upbraids the Cities wherein most of his mighty Works were done, because they repented not. And the Apostle to the He-

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Mark xvi, 20. John xv. 24. Mat. xi. 20. brews

brews reasons thus: I How shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost? On the other hand, we are told by St. 2 John, that when Christ was in Ferusalem, at the Passover, many believed in his name, when they faw the Miracles which he did. And Nicodemus a Ruler of the Jews, addresses himself thus to Christ, 3 We know that thou art a Teacher come from God; for no Man can do the Miracles that thou dost, except God be with him. Again, 4 Many of the People believed on bim, and faid, when Christ cometh will be do more Miracles than these which this Man hath done? And in another place, the Multitude who were fed with the Loaves, when they had feen the Miracles which Jesus did, said, 5 This is of a Truth that Prophet which should come into the World. And when the Chief Priefts and Pharifees had affembled a Council to confider what they should do,

Heb. ii. 3, 4. <sup>2</sup> John ii. 23. <sup>3</sup> John iii. 2. 4 John vii. 31. <sup>5</sup> John vi. 14. <sup>1</sup> their

their reasoning was this: 'What do we? For this Man doth many Miracles. If we let him thus alone, all Men will believe on him. Upon which St. Peter might well say, 2 Ye Men of Israel, hear these Words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man approved of God among you, by Miracles, and Wonders, and Signs, which God did by him in the midst of you, as

ye your selves also know.

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These Appeals which our Saviour makes to his Miracles, together with the immediate Convictions wrought by them, are joint Testimonies of the Propriety and Esticacy of the Argument drawn from thence. And fince Miracles could be no Testimony at all, if they were not true and real; those Appeals and Convictions are of themselves sufficient, to shew the Vanity and Wildness of a late attempt, to prove that our Saviour's Miracles were merely Allegorical; in which it is hard to perfuade one's felf, that the Author, if in his right Mind, can be ferious and in earnest. But since the Notion he has vented, is industriously made use of by Scepticks and Infidels, to stagger and perplex unwary and ignorant people, who

<sup>1</sup> John xi. 47, 48. <sup>2</sup> Acts ii. 22.

eafily fee, that if Christ wrought no real Miracles, Christianity has no real Support; for their sakes, and on no other Account, I will proceed to shew the Absurdity of that Notion; without any defign to convince the Author himself, who either is not in

earnest, or not capable of Conviction.

What he undertakes to prove, is, That the Miracles of our Saviour as we find them in the Evangelists, however related by them as Historical Truths, and without the least Intimation that they are not to be understood literally, were not real but merely Allegorical, and that they are to be interpreted, not in the literal but only Myftical Senses; which strange and Enthusiasti. cal Scheme, he has purfued throughout, in a most profane and ludicrous Manner. His Pretence is, that the Fathers confider'd our Saviour's Miracles in the same Allegorical Way that he does; that is as merely Allegorical, and exclusive of the Letter. An Affertion fo notoriously false, that it requires the greatest Charity to think that he himself did not know it to be so. Some of the Fathers indeed, in their Explications of Scripture to the People, of which their Sermons

Sermons in those Days chiefly consisted, being willing to use all Means, and to omit no Opportunities of exciting in them a spirit of Piety and Devotion, did not confine themselves to the bare Letter, but endeayour'd upon the Foundation of the Letter to raife spiritual Meanings, and to allegorife upon them by way of moral Application; and this, not only upon the Miracles of our Saviour, but upon almost all the Historical Facts which are recorded either in the Old or New Testament; and the same was also a receiv'd Method of Instruction among the Fews. But would he have us suppose that the Primitive Fathers intended to deny the literal Facts of our Saviour's Miracles, or to make them merely Allegorical; when he has not produced any one Authority out of the Whole Body of the Fathers of the first three hundred Years after Christ, except Origen, that can be pretended to countenance his excluding the literal Sense? He has indeed heaped together a Number of Quotations; chiefly out of the Fathers and Writers of the fourth, fifth, and following Centuries; but many of the Passages he quotes, either expresly affirm

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affirm or evidently suppose the literal Truth of our Saviour's Miracles; and others of them tell us, that we must not rest in the Letter, but endeavour to find out mystical and spiritual Meanings. Now as such Quotations are far from denying the Truth of our Saviour's Miracles, according to the Letter, they can be no manner of Service to his Cause; and therefore it is hard to fay for what end he produced them, unless it was to amuse his English Readers with the Appearance of a great Variety of Authorities, which he must needs see were nothing to his Purpofe.

And as to Origen himself; tho' he went further into the Allegorical way than any other, yet so far was he from not believing and allowing our Saviour's Miracles in the literal Sense, that in many parts of his Book against Celsus, which consists not of popular Discourses, but of just and fober Reasonings, he directly argues from them in Defence of Christianity. 'In anfwer to Celfus's Boastings of the Precepts and Discipline of the Greeks, he urges, that Christianity has a more divine Demonstrati-

Lib. r. p. 5. Edit. Spenc.

### PASTORAL LETTER.

on, which the Apostle calls the Demonstration of the Spirit, and of Power; and he explains Power to be the Miracles of Christ; which, fays he, we believe to have been wrought, as from many other Arguments, fo particularly from this, that the Footsteps of the same Power do still appear. In several places, he takes notice of Celfus's afcribing the Miracles of our Saviour to Art Magick; and having particularly mention'd the restoring of Lunaticks, casting out Devils and curing Diseases, in the Name of Christ, he adds, that Celsus not being able to resist the Evidences arising from the wonderful Works wrought by him, of which those he nam'd were a few out of many, afcrib'd them to Art Magick; and then he shews at large the Absurdity of that 2 Supposition. He takes 3 notice, that both Moses and Fesus did wonderful works, and fuch as exceeded Human Power, and then expostulates with the Yews for believing the Things which Mofes wrought though recorded fingly by himfelf, and rejecting the Miracles of Christ,

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<sup>\*</sup> Lib. 1. p. 7, 30, 34, 53. Lib. 1. p. 53. 3 Lib. 1. p. 34.

upon the Testimony of his Disciples; while the Christians, as he adds, were the more ready to believe the Miracles of Christ as recorded by his Disciples, on account of the Prophecy of Moses concerning him. He 1 argues for the Reality of the Defcent of the Holy Ghost upon our Saviour, from the Miracles which he wrought, and mentions the casting out Devils, and the curing Difeases, in his own Time, as one Argument of the Truth of those Miracles. In Proof that Jesus was the Son of God, he ' urges his healing the Lame and the Blind, according to the Prophecy concerning him; and then proceeds to shew the Reality of what the Evangelists relate concerning his raising Persons from the Dead, and why he raifed no more, and adds, that his Miracles were intended, not only to be Figures or Symbols, but also the Means of converting Multitudes to the Christian Faith; thereby plainly acknowledging the literal as well as the allegorical meaning. He 3 proves the Truth of Christ's Miracles, from others attempting to work the like;

<sup>\*</sup> Lib. 1. p. 34.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Lib. 2. p. 87, 88.

<sup>3</sup> Lib. z. p. 91, 92.

## PASTORAL LETTER. 47

and makes the fame difference between their Works and Christ's that there was between the Miracles of Moses and the Magicians, and fays that a Jew who defends the Miracles of Moles, is as perverse as the Egyptians if he rejects those of Christ. He I speaks of the Miracles of Moses and Christ, as converting whole Nations; and observes that Christ was to overthrow the Customs, in which the People had been educated, and to deal with a Nation that had been taught to require Signs and Wonders, and therefore had at least as great need to shew them in order to gain belief, as Moses, who had not those Difficulties to overcome. -- " He 2 fays, that whoever should embrace the Christian Religion, was required by Christ and his Disciples, to believe his Divinity and Miracles. -- "He ? speaks of the wonderful Works of Christ (howsoever disbeliev'd by Celsus) as the Effects of a divine Power. And, as to the Apostles, he 4 shews how absurd it would have been in them to attempt the Introducing and Establishing a

Lib. 2. p. 91, 92. 2 Lib. 3. p. 128.

<sup>3</sup> Lib. 7. p. 368. 4 Lib. 1. p. 30, 34-

new Doctrine in the World, without the Help of Miracles.

Judge now, whether Origen ought to be produc'd as one who did not believe the Miracles of Christ, according to the literal Sense, and as full and proper Testimonies of the Truth of the Christian Religion; and let this Instance convince you, how unsafe it is to take the Opinion of the Fathers, or of any other Writers, from particular Paffages and Expressions which may be pick'd out of them, without attending to the Occasions upon which they were written, or comparing them with the other Works of the same Authors. A Liberty which has been much us'd of late; and if allow'd, would put it in the Power of defigning Men to make almost any Writer speak what Opinion they please.

At the same Time it must be own'd, that Origen, and some others, indulg'd themselves surther in the Allegorical Way, than was consistent with sober Reasoning and sound Judgment: for which, He in particular was greatly blam'd, both in his own Time, and by many of the Fathers

of the succeeding Ages. But their intentions were certainly pious: And it could not be imagin'd, that there ever would be fuch a Man in the World, who should make it a Question, Whether any Father believed the Facts literally understood, who in his Defence of the Christian Religion against Tews and Heathens, appealed to the Miracles of our Saviour in their plain and literal Sense, as the great Evidence of his being fent from God. And as they practifed the Allegorical Method, not only inthe Point of Miracles, but in almost all the Historical Parts of the Old and New Testiment, they are as good Authorities for entirely destroying the whole Historical Truth of both, as that of Miracles.

Tho' therefore it were granted, that alk the ancient Fathers of the Church had unanimously indulg'd themselves more or less in the Allegorical Meanings; it would not at all help this Writer, unless he could make it clear, that they also deny'd the literal Meaning; and to say that any one who urged the Miracles of our Saviour as the great Vindication of Christianity, could at the same Time deny the

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literal Sense of them, is a flat contradiction; since, as I observed before, Miracles can be no Evidence at all in any other Meaning but the literal. Much less will be find any thing in the Fathers to countenance that ludicrous and blasphemous Way, in which he has treated Christ and his Miracles.

The Truth is, the Supposition of an Allegorical and Myflical Meaning, exclusive of the Literal, carries in it so many strange Abfurdities, that nothing could lead any one into it, but either great Weakness of Understanding, or great Disorder of Mind, or very ftrong Prejudices against the Chriftian Religion. For Instance; 'That when Christ appealed to his Works, as he often did, to prove his Divine Mission, he meant only allegorical and not real Works; 'That when the People asked one another, whether the Messiah, when he came, would do greater Works than these, they did not mean real, but only imaginary Works; 'That when Christ bad the Disciples of John the Baptist tell their Master, what Cures they had feen him work, in order to fatisfy him that he was the Meffiah, as working the fame Cures which the Prophets had foretold

told the Meffiah should work, neither the Prophets nor Christ meant real Cures; That the great Number of Ferus who were converted upon feeing Christ heal the Sick, and raise to Life those who had been Dead, did not fee them first to be Sick or Dead, and then alive or whole again, and fo had no real Ground for their Conversion: 'That when the Multitudes came to be heal'd, upon their having feen the miraculous Cures that Christ had wrought upon others, they had really feen nothing to induce and encourage them to come to him; ' That when the Leper came back to thank our Saviour, he was not really heal'd, but came to return Thanks for Nothing; 'That when the People were amaz'd to see the Miraeles he did, they were amaz'd at Nothing; 'That when the Jews fear'd the Success of his Miracles. and call'd a Council to prevent it, they were only afraid of Shadows, and confulted about Nothing; 'That when they perfecuted him and fought to flay him, for healing a Lame Man on the Sabbath Day. he had really wrought no Cure; 'That when the People intended to make him a King,

King, on Account of his extraordinary Works, they had feen no Works, but what any other Man might have done; That when it was urg'd by the Jews, that he wrought Miracles by the Help of Beelzebub, any thing could have driven them to that Shift, but that they knew the Fasts themselves to be real and undeniable; 'That when the People were fill'd with Wonder and Amazement at the Cure of the Lame Man, which was wrought by St. Peter, they did not fee him leaping and walking, who before was laid daily at the Gate of the Temple to ask alms; and when the Council could fay nothing against it, nor could deny that a notable Miracle had been done, no fuch Thing as a Miracle had been wrought, but both Council and People were deceived; 'That when Simon Magus defired to purchase the Power of bestowing the Holy Ghost, he meant to purchase no Power but what he had before; 'That when the People of Lyftra accounted Paul and Barnabas to be Gods, they faw nothing in them more than common Men; ' That when the People out of every Nation were fill'd with Wonder, to hear

hear the Apostles speak every one in their own proper Language, there was really nothing to be wonder'd at; ' That the Conversions made in all Nations by the Apofiles, of great as well as small, learned as well as unlearned, were all made by them without giving a real Testimony of a Divine Mission: 6 That when the Writers of the Church afferted the Truth of Christianity upon the Evidence of the Miracles wrought by our Saviour and his Apostles, the Yews and Heathens, against whom they wrote, if they could have call'd in Question the Reality of those Miracles, would not have fix'd their Foot there, but put themfelves to the Difficulty of inventing other Causes than a divine Power to which they might ascribe them: In a Word, . That the whole History of the Old and New Testament, which is all equally capable of being run into Allegory and Mystery by Enthusiastical Heads, has no Meaning at all, but such as every one shall think fit to allegorife it into, by the mere strength of Fancy and Imagination.

These are some of the shocking Absurdities, which attend that wild Imagination

of Miracles wholly myffical and allegorical, and without a literal Meaning. And as to the Blasphemous Manner in which a late Writer has taken the Liberty to treat our Saviour's Miracles and the Author of them; though I am far from contending, that the Grounds of the Christian Religion. and the Doctrines of it, may not be difcuss'd at all times, in a calm, decent, and ferious Way (on the contrary, I am very fure, that the more fully they are difcuss'd, the more firmly they will stand,) vet I cannot but think it the Duty of the Civil Magistrate at all Times, to take care that Religion be not treated either in a ludicrous or a reproachful Manner, and effectually to discourage such Books and Writings, as strike equally at the Foundation of all Religion, and of Truth, Virtue, Seriousness, and good Manners; and by Consequence at the Foundation of Civil Society.

6. But to return. To the Miracles of our Saviour, we may well add, as further Testimonies of a Divine Power, his PRE-DICTIONS of many Events, which were afterwards punctually fulfilled; 'That he should

should suffer at ' Ferusalem; That there he should be 2 betray'd unto the Chief Priests, and unto the Scribes, who would condemn him to Death, and deliver him to the Gentiles to be mock'd, and scourg'd; That 3 Judas was the Person who would betray him; That the other 4 Disciples would forfake him; 'That, particularly, Peter would deny him thrice; That, as to the manner of his Death, it should be 6 Crucifixion; and that he would rife again the third Day. To which we may add his foretelling the manner of St. Peter's Death, and that 7 St. John should live to fee the Destruction of Jerufalem; together with the 8 Persecutions which should befal the Apostles after his Death, and the Misfion of the 9 Holy Ghost to comfort and enlighten them, and to enable them effectually to preach and propagate the Gospel.

But most remarkable to this purpose is his foretelling the Destruction of \* Ferusalem, and of the whole Jewish Nation, with the several Circumstances of it: as, 'The

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Luke xiii. 33,34. Mat. xvi. 21. <sup>2</sup> Mat. xx. 18, 19. <sup>3</sup> Mat. xxvi. 25. <sup>4</sup> Mat. xxvi. 31. <sup>5</sup> Mat. xxvi. 34. <sup>6</sup> Mat. xx. 19. <sup>7</sup> John xxi. 18, 22. <sup>8</sup> Mat. x. 17, 18, 19, 20. <sup>9</sup> Acts i. 8. <sup>10</sup> Luke xxi. 12, 14.

Time of its coming, 'The destroying of the City, 'The demolishing of the Temple, 'The Judgments upon the Nation in general, 'And their final Dispersion: All which were distinctly foretold by Christ; and are attested by Josephus (an Historian of their own Nation who lived at the Time) to have punctually come to pass, according to the Predictions.

As to the Time; our 'Saviour having enumerated the dismal Calamities that were coming upon the Jews, declares, 'That that Generation should not pass, 'till all these Things were fulfilled; and he supposes, that some at least of those to whom he spake when he enumerated the Signs of their coming, should be then alive, 'Ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the Doors; and after his Resurrection, he intimates that 'St. John should live to see those terrible Judgments; which in Scripture are express'd by his coming, and which were all executed, according to those Predictions, in less than

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Matt. xxiii. 34. Mark xiii. 9.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Luke xxi. 32. <sup>3</sup> Matt. xxiv. 33.

<sup>4</sup> John xxi. 22.

# PASTORAL LETTER. 57 forty Years from the Time they were de-

nounced.

Next, The Destruction of Ferufalem, and the Circumstances of it are thus foretold by our Saviour; Thine Enemies shall cast a Trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the Ground, and thy Children within thee, and shall not leave in thee one Stone upon another .--- 2 Then shall be great Tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the World to this time, no, nor ever shall be. All which was fulfilled, in 3 Titus's encompassing the City with a new Fortisication rais'd by the Soldiers in three Days, fo that none could come out; upon which there enfued a most 4 dreadful Famine, the 5 Stores and Granaries having been burnt and confumed before, in the feditious Quarrels and Fightings among themselves under three several Factions endeavouring to devour one another. The City being taken, was 6 levell'd with the Ground, as if it had never been inhabited; and what by

Luke xix. 43, 44. 2 Matt. xxiv. 21. 3 Josephus of the Jewish Wars, 1.6. c. 13. 4 c. 14. 5 Jos. 1.6. c. 1. 6 Jos. 1.7. c. 18.

Famine, by Fire and Sword, and by their Slaughters of one another, 'eleven hundred thousand fews were destroyed, besides ninety seven thousand who were taken Prisoners; the Nation at that time being gather'd together at ferusalem, to celebrate the Passover.

The particular Destruction of the Temple is thus foretold by our Saviour, 2 There shall not be left here one Stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down. And 3 fosephus tells us, That Titus order'd the Soldiers to lay the Temple, as well as the City, even with the Ground; and another of their 4 Writers mentions the Fact of Turnus Rusus's digging the very Plot of Ground on which it stood with a Plough-share.

The Judgments that would fall upon the Nation in general, are thus express'd by our Saviour: 5 These be the days of Vengeance. There shall be great Distress in the Land, and Wrath upon this People, and they shall fall by the edge of the Sword. Ac-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Jof. 1. 7. c. 17. <sup>2</sup> Mat. xxiv. 2. <sup>3</sup> Jof. 1. 7. c. 18. <sup>4</sup> Maimonides. <sup>5</sup> Luke xxi. 22, 23, 24.

# PASTORAL LETTER. 59

cordingly they were destroy'd, ' to the Number of two hundred Thousand and upwards, in several Sieges, Battles, &c. in the Towns and Countries; besides the grand

Slaughter at Ferusalem.

The following Captivity and Dispersion of those who remain'd, was also foretold by our Saviour: 2 They shall be led away Captive into all Nations, and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the time of the Gentiles be fulfilled. Accordingly 3 Josephus, after he has describ'd the taking of Ferusalem, speaks of them as a People dispers'd over the Face of the Earth; and 4 particularly tells us, that the most graceful of the Captives were referv'd by Titus to be part of his Triumph; that, of the Remainder, those above seventeen Years of Age were fent into Egypt in Chains, to be employ'd in servile Offices; and others of them were fent into several Provinces for the use of the Theatres and publick Shows; and that all under seventeen Years of Age were expos'd to Sale. And ever fince, to

See the Calculation in Archbishop Usher's Chronology.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xxi. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Joseph. l. 7. c. 21.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph. l. 6. c. 17.

this Day, they have been, and still continue, a People dispers'd and scatter'd among the Nations of the Earth, without either Temple, or City, or Government of their own.

These Particulars concerning our Saviour's Death, and the state and condition of his Disciples and of the Fewish Nations, consequent upon it, are Events which are foretold, and which we find to have punctually come to pais, partly from the Accounts of our own Scriptures, and partly from a Jewish Historian of undoubted Credit and Authority. And that his Predictions, when fulfill'd, were intended by him to be Proofs of his being the Messiah, we may gather from his own Declarations. Having told his Disciples that Judas should betray him, he presently adds, I Now I tell you before it come, that when it is come to pass, ye may believe that I am He. And after the Prediction of his Death, Refurrection, and Afcention, he fays, 2 And now I have told you before it come to pass, that when it is come to pass, ye might believe, i. e. fays Dr. Hammond, That your feeing

<sup>\*</sup> John xiii. 19. 2 John xiv. 29.

#### PASTORAL LETTER. 61

my Prediction fulfilled, may convince you, that all which I have faid to you is true, and so make you believe on me. To the same Purpose, is that which he subjoins to his Account of the Persecutions that would befal his Disciples after his Death, 'These things I have told you, that when the Time shall come, ye may remember that I told you of them.

7. From the Predictions of our Saviour, and the fulfilling of them, carry your Thoughts to the speedy and wonderful Pro-PAGATION of the Gospel; and there also you will see the clearest Evidences of a Divine Power: A few obscure and illiterate Men, without Art or Eloquence, making Head against the ancient Religions of Kingdoms and Countries, and all the while professing themselves to be the Mesfengers of one who had been despis'd, and ill treated, and at last crucified in his own Country; and yet, under these Disadvantages, prevailing with Multitudes every where to be his Disciples, and to embrace his Religion; and this notwithstanding the Contrariety of its Doctrines to the Lusts, Pas-

fions and Prejudices of Mankind, and the fierce opposition it met with from the Powers of the World, and the terrible Persecutions which for fome Time were almost the certain Portion of the Profesiors of it: without any Encouragement to undergo them, but what was future and out of Sight. In these Circumstances, nothing could lead them to attempt the Propagation of it, with any Hope of Success, but a Promise of Divine Affistance, and their firm Reliance upon it; nothing could have given them fuch Success, but a divine Power working with them; nor can any Thing account for fo many Persons sealing the Doctrine with their Blood, in fo many different Parts of the World, but an absolute Asfurance of the Truth of what they taught, and a future Reward for their Labour and Sufferings.

They who require greater Testimonies of a Divine Mission and Power, than those I have mention'd under this Eighth General Head, are never to be satisfied. But, on the other Hand, when an honest and impartial Mind has satisfied it self, upon those Evidences, that our Saviour and his Apostles

## PASTORAL LETTER. 63

Apostles had a Divine Mission, and that they wrought many and great Miracles, and foretold Events by a Power and Inspiration evidently divine; it follows that the Doctrines, for the propagating of which they were fent, and for the Confirmation of which, those extraordinary Powers and Gifts were bestow'd, must undoubtedly be true, as coming from God and attested by Particularly, their divine Mission him. and Power being first established, their express and repeated Declarations that Jesus was the Messiah, become to us a full and irrefistible Proof of the Truth of it. And when a Question arises, whether or no this or that Prophecy in the Old Testament, this or that Type in the Fewif Law, had a Reference to the Messiah who was to come, and were actually fulfilled in Christ; it is eafy to determine with your felves, whether you ought to liften to Persons divinely inspir'd, who affirm they had a Reference to Christ, or to Persons who pretend to no fuch Inspiration, and would persuade you that they had not.

The Evidence arising from ancient Types and Prophecies, has, (as I told you before)

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fore) been fully confider'd, and clear'd from the Cavils and Objections of Infidels, by feveral very Learned Men; it being the proper Province of fuch, to follow the Adversary through all the Intricacies of the Yewish Learning, and the contemporary Histories, Customs, and Modes of Speaking and Writing. But, as Perfons who are unacquainted with these Things, and uncapable of entring minutely into fuch Enquiries, may eafily be misled and impos'd upon by artful and designing Men; fo I have shewn you under this Head, that you need not enter into them, but may receive full and clear Satisfaction from Evidences much more plain and direct, which lie equally open to all Capacities, and are perfectly well calculated for the Conviction of all, if there be but an honest and unprejudic'd Mind. And whoever shall affirm, that these are not a full and sufficient Ground of Conviction without a critical Enquiry into Types and Prophecies, must affirm at the same Time, that no Part of the Heathen World, who were all equally unacquainted with the Jewish Dispensation, could receive and embrace the Christian Faith

Faith upon a just and reasonable Foundation; and by Consequence, that all who did receive and embrace it, however wise and learned in other Respects, (which was the known Character of many of them) were, in that Particular, Fools and Ideots: Or rather, he must affirm, that it is impossible for God to make any Revelation at all, that can rationally be believ'd.

But because Practice (as I have observ'd under the three first Heads) has so great an Influence upon Principle, and it is to little Purpose to convince the Mind of the Truth of the Christian Religion, unless the Will and Affections be preserv'd in a right Disposition, and carefully guarded as well against the many Allurements to Vice and Profaneness which we see in the World, as against the Arts and Endeavours of wicked Men to break down the Fences of Religion; I will add one general Direction, which being duly attended to, will be a constant Guard against all such Attempts and Allurements; and, by preserving your Hearts in a Christian Disposition, will at the same time prepare them to continue stedfast in the Christian Faith.

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IX. And the Rule is this, That you be careful to preserve upon your Minds a serious Regard and Reverence to Things SACRED; that is, to every Thing that bears a Relation to God and his Religion, particularly his Word, his Name, his Day, his House and Ordinances, and his Ministers. For these are visible Memorials of God upon Earth; and, as they are the flanding Means of maintaining an Intercourse between God and Man, a serious Regard to them is a necesfary Means of keeping the Mind up in an habitual Reverence of God. On the contrary, there is not a more evident Testimony of a corrupt and deprav'd Disposition, than an irreverent Treatment of Things Sacred, a Contempt of any Thing that carries on it a Divine Impression, or an obstinate Neglect of any of those Ordinances which the Wisdom of God has appointed to support and preferve his Religion in the World. When therefore you hear any Person depreciating the publick Duties of Religion, and inveighing against Ordinances of all Kinds, and reprefenting publick Assemblies, and regular Ministers for the Administration of those Ordinances to be useless, or at least unnecessary; you have great Reason to suspect, that their final Aim is, by bringing these into Disuse and Contempt, to banish Christianity out of the Nation. And by the same Rule, whoever is seriously concern'd to preserve our Religion, and to maintain the Honour of it, must take great Care to preserve in himself, and propagate in others, a constant and serious Regard to every thing that bears a Relation to God, and to consider it as Sacred on that Account. Particularly,

ever we find deliver'd by the Prophets in the Old Testament, or by Christ and his Apostles in the New, is always to be consider'd by us as a Message from God to Men; and whoever considers it as such cannot fail of paying it the highest Regard and Reverence; much less can he fail of expressing, on all Occasions, his Abhorrence of making it the Subject of Wit and Jesting, and of raising Mirth from unserious Allusions to the Language or Matter of it; which, however usual in loose Company and among unthinking People, is a

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very great Degree of Impiety and Profaneness. As the Scriptures contain the Will of God, they are certainly entitled to your most serious Regard; and the most proper Testimony of your Regard, is, to read them frequently and with Attention; to have recourse to them as your great Rule of Duty, and the Treasure out of which religious Knowledge of every Kind is to be mainly drawn. In them, you find a continued Mixture of Precepts, Promifes and Threatnings; first, to shew you your Duty and to remind you of it, and then to quicken and encourage you in the Performance of it. And together with thefe, you fee the many Examples of pious and good Men, and the numerous Testimonies of God's Favour to the Righteous, and his Judgments upon the Wicked. In the fame Sacred Books, you behold the various Difpensations of God in the successive Ages of the World, and the glorious Scenes of Providence, opening by degrees, and fucceeding one another in a regular Order, and at last centring in the Messiah. And, by observing the several Ways in which God has reveal'd himself to Mankind, you clearly

clearly see the Excellency of the Christian Revelation above all others, in the Purity it requires, and the Rewards it proposes. In these and the like Ways, do the Holy Scriptures at once delight and edify all those who attend to them, and are conversant with them, and who regard and reverence them as the Sacred Oracles of God.

2. In like Manner the NAME of God is to be esteemed Sacred, in order to preferve upon the Mind an habitual Honour and Reverence to God himfelf; by not using it otherwise than seriously, and not mixing it with our ordinary Conversation, and much less prostituting it to Oaths, and Curses, and Imprecations. Such a profane Use of his Name, infensibly takes off the Veneration that is due to his Being; and by making him less and less fear'd, emboldens Men to be more and more wicked; and is accordingly feldom heard but in loofe company and among Men of profligate Lives. Wherefore, be careful to abstain from a common and irreverent use of that Sacred Name, and of all fuch expressions as fignify things of a religious Nature, as our

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our Faith, our Salvation, or the like; and not only to abstain from the undue Use of them your selves, but likewise to take all proper occasions to express your Dislike and Abhorrence of it in others, and especially in those who are placed under your more immediate care.

3. The Lord's DAY is to be esteem'd Sacred, as being fanctified and fet apart, for ceasing from our worldly Care and Labour, and meditating upon God, and paying that Honour and Adoration, which he requires of us, and which belongs to him, as the Creator, Preserver and Redeemer of Mankind. The devout and ferious Observation of this Day, is one of the most effectual Means to keep alive Religion in the World, both in the outward face of it, and in the Hearts and Lives of Christians; and nothing is more certain, than that it would quickly be lost and extinguish'd among the generality of Mankind, if it were not kept alive by the Appointment of this Day, for reviving upon their Minds a Sense of God and their Duty. Wherefore let this be a Day not only of Rest from Labour, but also of Meditation upon God and heavenly Things;

### PASTORAL LETTER. 71

Things; partly in a devout Attendance upon the publick Offices of Religion, and partly by allowing a reasonable Portion of the Day to the private Duties of reading the Holy Scripture and other good Books, and instructing your Children and Servants, and examining your own Lives, and praying to God for a Supply of your own private Necessities, Spiritual and Temporal. I say a reasonable Portion of the Day according to the Condition of particular Perfons and Families. For they who on all other Days were confin'd to hard Labour, or are otherwise oblig'd to a close Attendance on their worldly Affairs, must be allow'd in some Measure to consider this as a Day of Ease and Relaxation from Thought and Labour, as well as a day of Devotion; provided it be in a way that is innocent and inoffensive, and that the publick Offices of Religion be duly attended, and the Duties of a more private Nature be not neglected. But there are many others, whose Quality and Condition have freed them from the necessity of a constant Attendance upon worldly Bufiness, and to whom all other Days are equally Days of Ease and Diver-D 4 fion :

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fion; and from them it may well be expected, that they abstain from the Diversions on this Day, and employ it more strictly in the Duties of Religion; for which indeed they have greater need than others, to arm themselves against the manifold Temptations to which they are daily expos'd by Ease and Plenty. And when they have better Opportunity, and greater need, than the rest of Mankind, to give a strict attendance to the Duties of Religion on this Day; if they do it not it is much to be fear'd, that they have a greater relish for the Delights and Business of this World, than for Exercises of a Spiritual Nature.

4. Next to God's Day, his House is to be accounted Sacred, as it is a place fet apart for the Performance of religious Offices, and for the publick Administration of religious Ordinances, in which all Christians are bound to join. The Duty of afsembling for the publick Worship of God, appears to be a necessary Part of the Chriftian Religion; as well from the first Institution of the Christian Church, as from the general Practice of Christians in all Ages, and all Countries. Our Saviour and his Apostle

Apostles found the Jewish Worship, every Sabbath-day regularly fettled in their Synagogues, and were so far from condemning those Assemblies, that they join'd in them. After his Ascension, we read, that they who upon the preaching of the Gospel had received the Word, continued stedfastly in the Apostles Dostrine and Fellowship, and in breaking of Bread, and in Prayers; and that they continued daily with one accord in the Temple. The Christians in particular Cities and Countries, are every where in the New Testament styled Churches, which probably denotes an Affembly of Persons call'd together into one Body; and we find the Apostles 2 ordaining Elders in the Churches planted by them, which Elders are spoken of as Heads of the feveral Churches, and Rulers in them; and one Part of the Office was, to 3 labour in the Word and Dostrine, to take beed to the Flock, and to feed the Church. At Antioch, where the Disciples were first call'd Christians, 4 Paul and Barnabas as-

Acts ii. 42, 46. 2 Acts xiv. 23. Tit. i. 5. Acts xi. 30. xx. 17, 28. xxi. 18. 3 1 Tim. v. 17. 4 Acts xi. 26.

fembled themselves with the Church a whole Year, and taught much People; and afterwards, we read of ' Prophets and Teachers in the Church that was at Antioch. In other Places of the New Testament, we find the first Day of the Week (the Day of our Saviour's Refurrection) spoken of as the ordinary Time of the Christian Assemblies; \* Upon the first Day of the Week, when the Disciples came together to break Bread, Paul preached unto them. And the fame 3 Apostle gives special Directions to the Christians at Corinth, as he had done before to the Churches of Galatia, That upon the first Day of the Week every one should lay by bim in store as God had prosper'd him, that there might be no Gatherings when be came. In his first & Epistle directed to the same Church, he lays down many Rules for holding their Assemblies in an orderly Manner: He first reproves them for their disorderly Celebration of the Feast of Charity, and the Lord's Supper, and tells them, . That they came together, not for the better but for the worse, ' That when they came to-

<sup>\*</sup> Acts xiii, v. \* Acts xx. 7. \* 1 Cor. xxi.

gether in the Church, he heard there were Divisions among them, ' That their behaving themselves as if they were eating and drinking in their own Houses was a despising of the Church of God. After this, he proceeds to give them a particular Account of the Institution of the Lord's Supper, with the Direction of Christ to celebrate it in Remembrance of him; which he relsewhere calls the Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ; speaking of it as a Symbol of Christian Union, or the Badge of their Relation to Christ and to one another; all which is necessarily suppos'd to be perform'd in publick Affemblies. In the same Epistle (ch. xiv.) against speaking in an unknown Tongue, he fays, (ver. 16.) How shall be that occupieth the room of the Unlearned lay Amen, at thy giving of Thanks, seeing be understandeth not what thou fayest? At the twenty third and twenty fixth Verses, he speaks of the Church being come together into one Place, and then gives farther Directions for their more orderly Behaviour in their Assemblies, because, as he adds at the thirty third Verse, h 1 Cor. x. 16, 17.

God is not the Author of Confusion, but of Peace, as in all Churches of the Saints; which in those Days was the common Name of Christians. At the thirty fourth Verse, The Women are enjoin'd to keep silence in the Churches; and he concludes with this general Direction, Let all things be done decently and in order. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, the Christians are first exhorted to bold fast the Profession of their Faith without wavering; and then, Not to for fake the affembling of themselves together, even in Times of Persecution. And that they strictly conform'd to this Apostolical Rule, we have the Testimony of Pliny a Heathen Writer, who being Governor of a Roman Province about the Year of Christ 104, gave the Emperor an Account of what he had learn'd concerning the Christians, 2 That they us'd to meet together on a certain Day before Light, (for fear of the Heathen Persecutors;) when they join'd in finging a Hymn to Christ, and enter'd into a solemn Engagement not to steal, nor rob, nor commit Adultery, nor defraud; which plainly refers to the Celebration of the Eucharist. But 3 Justin Mar-<sup>1</sup> Heb. x. 23, 25. <sup>2</sup> Plin. 10. Ep. 97. <sup>3</sup> Apol. 2.

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lyr, an ancient Father, in his Apology for the Christians about the Year of Christ 150, gives a more particular Account of their publick Worship, " That on the Day " call'd Sunday, all the Christians in City " and Country affembled in one Place; where " the Writings of the Apostles and Prophets were read: That as foon as the Reader " had made an End, there follow'd an Ex-" bortation to the People; and after that, " Prayers, and the Holy Eucharift; the " Person who officiated, praying, and the " People faying Amen." To all which we may add, That from the beginning of Chriflianity to this Time, no Instance can be given of any Country in which the Christian Religion has been planted, where there has not also been Prayer and Preaching, and Administration of Sacraments, in an open and publick Manner; though it is known to have been planted by several Apostles in several Countries.

And it is to be hoped, that there are none among us at this Day, who hold Religious Assemblies to be useless and unnecessary, except the open or secret Enemies of Christianity; who well know, how great a Means

a Means they are to preserve a Sense of God and Religion in the World, and to improve Men in the Graces and Virtues of the Christian Life. But if there be any, who otherwife bear no ill Will to the Christian Religion, and yet are of the Number of those, who think publick Prayer, Preaching, and other Ordinances, to be Things indifferent and unnecessary; it is, because they consider not the corrupt State of Human Nature, nor the common Condition of Human Life; how strongly some are inclin'd to the Delights of the World, and to what degree others are fwallow'd up in the Cares of it; how ignorant many are of their Duty, and how often it is feen, that they who know it, practife it no better than those who know it not; how little Disposition Men naturally have to Acts of Devotion, and how unmindful they are apt to be of a future State. Upon the whole, what small Hope there is, that the Generality of Mankind would retain just Notions of God and Religion, if they were not frequently explain'd to them; or attend to their Duty, if it were not frequently inculcated upon them; or refrain from inordinate Enjoyments,

ments, if they were not frequently warn'd of the Danger of them; or be influenc'd by future Rewards and Punishments, if they were not frequently put in mind of them; or laftly, that they would duly perform the Work of Devotion, if they were not call'd to it, and affifted in it by publick Offices and Ministers appointed for that End, and at the same time excited to Seriousness and Attention, by the Solemnity of the Work, and the Examples of their Fellow Christians. Which shews, on one hand, the Wisdom of God in providing those outward Means, to check and cure our inward Depravities; and, on the other hand, the Folly of those who in their Reasonings against Instituted Rites and Ordinances of Religion, feem to forget the Blindness and Corruption of Human Nature, or rather to suppose that Mankind are a Race of Angels wholly freed from the Power of Temptations, and carried, by their own Nature, with the greatest Readiness and Chearfulness, into all the Acts of Adoration and Obedience.

Now, if Publick Assemblies be necessary, the Appointment of Places for those Assemblies is also necessary; and as the

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Place becomes Sacred, by the Sacred Offices which are perform'd in it, so the true way of expressing our regard to the Place, is a devout and religious Attendance upon the Offices; to consider, that we go to the House of God, not for Fashion sake, but for the ends of Devotion and Spiritual Improvement; and accordingly to fix our Attention, and to join feriously and devoutly with the Congregation in the feveral Parts of Divine Service. On the contrary, a wilful neglect of the Christian Assemblies, or a careless and irreverent Behaviour in them, is a Contempt and Profanation of the House of God, and favours of a Mind void of Religion.

5. As the House of God is Sacred, on account of the Religious Offices that are perform'd in it; so are the MINISTERS who perform those Offices, and who have receiv'd a regular Appointment to it, as far as they answer the Ends of such Appointment. By their Hands the Holy Ordinances of the Christian Religion are administred, by their Tongues the Word of God is explain'd and enforc'd, and by their Ministry many other Bleffings and Benefits are deriv'd to the People committed to their

their Care. And as to the Necessity of a regular Mission, without which no Person may minister publickly in Holy Things; this appears, as well from the first Institution of a Christian Church and from the constant Practice of it in all Ages, as from the endless Confusions that must unavoidably enfue, if every one might fer up himfelf to be a publick Teacher, and intrude at pleasure into the Ministerial Office. Whether therefore we regard the Nature and Original of their Office, or the Work they are employed about; they are to be confider'd as God's Ministers, and to be received and respected under that Character, unless they forfeit their Title to Respect, by living unfuitably to their Character. In which Case, I am very far from recommending them either to your Love or Esteem, since I know it is impossible for you to pay either; there being no Perfon fo truly the object of Abhornence and Contempt in the Sight of all good Men, as a Minister of the Gospel, who by his irregular Life renders himfelf unworthy of his Function and Character. But let me caution you against bing drawn into a Diflike

Dislike of the Order it felf, as unnecessary and useless; for this will of Course draw you into a Difregard of the Ordinances of Christianity, or rather will abolish the Ordinances themselves; and accordingly it has been labour'd by the Promoters of Infidelity, as one effectual Expedient to banish the Face of Christianity from among us. Let me also caution you against censuring the whole Body of the Clergy for the Faults of a very few in Proportion out of so great a Number, and against charging that as Vice or Immorality, which may in Reality beno more than Indiscretion or Imprudence. In general, let me caution you against a Delight in censuring the Clergy, and a Defire to make them appear mean and contemptible in the Eyes of their People, by which you bring upon your selves the great Guilt of difabling them to do good in their feveral Stations; and if you find any who are really immoral, and persevere in it, shew your Concern for the Honour of God and Religion, by taking proper Methods to bring them under the Censure's of the Church, for the Reformation of them, and the Terror of others. X. Above

### PASTORAL LETTER. 83

X. Above all Things, beware of falling into an Unconcernedness and Indifference, in the Point of Religion. When a Revelation is generally believ'd to come from God, and has been reciev'd and embrac'd as such by fo many successive Ages and different Nations, and by Multitudes of Wise and Good Men in all those Ages and Nations; When it lays down Rules for our present State, which manifestly tend to Holiness, and Peace, and the Improvement and Perfection of human Nature, and propofes to Mankind a future State of Rewards or Punishments, both of them unspeakable and endless, according to their Obedience or Disobedience to the Precepts it lays down; Certainly, such a Revelation demands the Regard and Attention of a Rational Creature, fo far as foberly to confider it, and to enquire carefully into the Grounds of it, as a Matter in which he is nearly concern'd. Christianity requires no farther Favour, than a fair and impartial Enquiry into the Grounds and Doctrines of and for Men who live in a Country where it is publickly profess'd, and where they have all the proper and necessary Means

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Means of Information, not to attend to it at all, or to confider it with fuch Indifference as if they thought themselves unconcern'd in it, is the highest Degree of Stupidity and Folly. Let me therefore befeech you, to think of Religion as a Matter of great Importance in it felf, and of infinite Concern to every one of you; and not to fuffer your felves, either to be diverted by the Business or Pleasures of the World, from regarding it; or deluded by wicked Men into an Opinion that it deferves not your Regard.

These, my Brethren, are the Rules and Directions which I would put into your Hands, and recommend to your ferious and frequent Perusal; hoping that by the Blesfing of God they may contribute to your Establishment in the Christian Faith and Doctrine against all Attempts of Atheistical and Wicked Men to seduce and corrupt you. And that, under the Influence of God's Holy Spirit, they may become effectual to that great End, is the earnest Prayer of

Your Faithful Friend and Pastor,

#### The BISHOP of London's

# Second Pastoral Letter, &c.

Occasion'd by some late Writings, in which it is afferted, "That REA-SON is a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, without the Help of REVELATION.

HE Arguments that have been used to support the Cause of Insidelity, may be reduced to two general Heads; one, That there is not sufficient Evidence of the Truth and Au-

thority of the Gospel-Revelation; the other, That Reason being a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, there was no Need of such a Revelation. The Tendency of the first is to persuade Men to reject the Gospel; and the Tendency of the satisfy

fatisfy them that they may without danger or inconvenience lay afide and neglett it; and wherever either of these Arguments prevails, the Work of Infidelity is effectu-

ally carried on.

To prevent your being feduc'd or shaken by any Suggestion that the Evidences of the Truth and Authority of the Christian Revelation are not full and fufficient. I endeavour'd in my first Letter to bring those Evidences into as narrow a Compass as I could; that, having fet them before you in one View and in their united Strength, you might be able to judge for your felves. And as a Chain of Evidences fo plain and forcible, cannot fail to establish every unprejudic'd Mind in a firm Belief that the Gospel-Revelation was from God; so, when that is once establish'd, no Suggestion either against the Need of such a Revelation, or against our Obligation to receive it, ought to make any Impression upon you; because, to suppose that God makes a Revelation which is needless, is a direct Impeachment of his Wisdom; and to affirm that we are not bound to attend to and receive it; when made, is no less an Impeachment of his Authority. But

# PASTORAL LETTER. 87

But fince the Infidels of our Age are endeavouring to lead Men into a difregard of all Revelation, by magnifying the Strength of Natural Reason, and recommending it as a full and fufficient Guide in Matters of Religion, and from thence infer, that the Means of Salvation directed by the Gospel, notwithstanding all the Evidences of their being God's own Appointment, are to be laid aside as Superstitions and human Inventions, and every Man is to have the framing of his own Religion; Since also there is great Cause to apprehend, that many may give too favourable Entertainment to a Scheme which thus flatters the Pride of human Understanding, and which by leffening or removing the Terrors of the Gospel, shakes off the Restraints that are most uneasy to the Corruptions of Nature: For these Reasons, it highly concerns those who have the Care of Souls, to guard them against such fatal Errors; first, by convincing them of the Insufficiency of Natural Reason to be a Guide in Religion, and by Consequence of the Need of a Divine Revelation and our Obligations to attend to it; and then, by fetting

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fetting before them the peculiar Excellencies and Advantages of the Christian Revelation, and the great Sinfulness of Rejecting it. Of these, and some other Points which naturally fall in with them, I will endeavour to give you a full and clear View, under the following Heads:

I. The true and proper Use of Reason, with regard to Revelation.

II. The Infufficiency of Reason to be a Guide in Religion.

III. The great Need, and Expedience of a Divine Revelation for that End.

IV. The Obligation we are under to English quire whether any Revelation has been made, and what Evidences there are of its coming from God.

V. The Duty of Mankind to Receive for their Guide, whatever Revelation comes from God; and to receive it whole and entire.

VI. The peculiar Excellencies of the Christian Revelation.

VII. The great Sinfulness and Danger of Rejecting this Revelation.

# PASTORAL LETTER. 89

I. Of the true and Proper Use of Reason, with Regard to Revelation. Those among us who have labour'd of late Years to fet up Reason against Revelation, would make it pass for an establish'd Truth, that if you will embrace Revelation, you must of course quit your Reason; which, if it were true, would doubtless be a strong Prejudice against Revelation. But so far is this from being true, that it is univerfally acknowledg'd that Revelation itself is to stand or fall by the test of Reason, or, in other Words, according as Reason finds the Evidences of its coming from God, to be or not to be sufficient and conclusive, and the Matter of it to contradict, or not contradict, the natural Notions which Reason gives us of the Being and Attributes of God, and of the effential Differences between Good and Evil. And when Reason, upon an impartial Examination, finds the Evidences to be full and fufficient, it pronounces that the Revelation ought to be receiv'd, and as a necessary Consequence thereof, directs us to give up our selves to the Guidance of it. But here Reason stops;

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not as fet aside by Revelation, but as taking Revelation for its Guide, and not thinking itself at Liberty to call in question the Wisdom, and Expedience of any Part, after it is fatisfy'd that the whole comes from God; any more than to object against it as containing fome things, the Manner, End and Defign of which it cannot fully comprehend. These were the wife and pious Sentiments of an ingenious Writer of our own Time; 'I gratefully receive and rejoice in the Light of Revelation, which fets me at Rest in many Things, the Manner whereof my poor Reason can by no Means make out to me. And \* elsewhere, having laid it down for a general Maxim, ' That Reason must be our · last Judge and Guide in every Thing; he immediately adds, I do not mean, that we must consult Reason, and exa-· mine whether a Proposition reveal'd from God, can be made out by Natural Principles, and if it cannot, that then we may reject it. But consult it we must, and by it examine whether it be a Revelation from God, or no. And if Rea-\* Lock, Vol. 1. p. 573. \* Lock, Vol. 1. p. 334. · fon

# PASTORAL LETTER. 91

fon finds it to be reveal'd from God,

Reason then declares for it, as much as

for any other Truth, and makes it one of

her Distates. Which is in Effect what 'St. Peter means, when he commands Christians to be always ready to give a Reason of the

Hope that is in them.

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Agreeable to this, the Bounds of Reafon and Faith are laid out by the same Writer, as follows: ' Reason (says he) ' as contradiftinguish'd to Faith, I take to be the Discovery of the Certainty or Probability of fuch Propositions or Truths, which the Mind arrives at by Deduction " made from Ideas which it has got by the use of its natural Faculties, viz. by Sensation, or Reflection. Faith on the other Side, is the Affent to any Proposition not thus made out by the Deductions of Reaon, but upon the Credit of the Propofer. as coming from God in some extraordinaby Way of Communication. — And again; 's Reason is natural Revelation, whereby the eternal Father of Light, and Fountain of all Knowledge, communi-1 Pet, iii. 15. <sup>2</sup> Lock, p. 326. J Lock. V. I. p. 331.

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cates to Mankind that Portion of Truth, which he has laid within the Reach of their natural Faculties; Revelation is na-' tural Reason Enlarged by a new set of · Discoveries communicated by God immediately, which Reason vouches the Truth of by the Testimony and Proof it gives, that they come from God .- And elfewhere, ' Thus far the Dominion of Faith reaches, and that without any violence or Hindrance to Reason; which is not in-' jur'd or disturb'd, but assisted and im-' proved, by new Discoveries of Truth, coming from the eternal Fountain of · Knowledge .- And, · Whatfoever is divine Revelation, ought to over-rule all our Opinions, Prejudices, and Interests, and hath a Right to be received with full · Affent. Such a Submission as this, of our Reason to Faith, takes not away the Land-marks of Knowledge: This shakes onot the Foundation of Reason, but leaves us that Use of our Faculties, for which

So little did this acute Writer dream of the new Notions which have been fince in-

2 Ibid. <sup>2</sup> Lock, Vol. 1. p. 329.

they were given.

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vented, to support the Cause of Infidelity, That God cannot, confistently with the Immutability of his Nature, make any new Revelation [tho' to mutable Creatures] by way of Addition to the original Law of Nature; 'That the making any fuch new Revelation, would be to deal with his Creatures in an arbitrary Manner; 'That no Evidences from Miracles, or other external Testimonies, upon which any new Revelation claims to be received as coming from God, are to be at all regarded; and, That the Matter of such a Revelation is not to be attended to by any Man, further than He sees the Fitness and Wisdom of it, and can suppose it to be Part of the original Law of Nature; that is, it is not to be regarded or attended to at all, as a Revelation .- But this, by the way.

II. Reason, of itself, is an insufficient Guide in Matters of Religion. But before I proceed directly to the Proof of this, I must caution you against several fallacious Arguings upon this Point, by which you may otherwise be deceived and imposed on.

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One is, the Arguing from the Powers of

Reason in a State of Innocence, in which the Understanding is supposed to be clear and ftrong, and the Judgment unbias'd and free from the Influences of inordinate Appetites and Inclinations; to the Powers and Abilities of Reason under the present corrupt State of human Nature: In which, we find by Experience how often we are deceiv'd, even in Things before our Eyes and the common Affairs of human Life; and more particularly, in the Case of Religion, how apt our Judgment would be to follow the bent of our Passions and Appetites, and to model our Duty according to their Motions and Defires, if God had left this wholly to every one's Reason, and not given us a more plain and express Revelation of his Will, to check and balance that Influence which our Passions and Appetites are found to have over our Reason and Judgment.

Another fallacious way of Arguing is, that as Reason is our Guide in the Affairs of this Life, it may also be our Guide in the Affairs of Religion, and the Concerns of the next Life. Whereas in one, it has the Assistance of Sense, and Experience,

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and Observation, but in the other, it is lest in great Measure to Conjecture and Speculation. Or if Reason were equally capable of making a Judgment upon Things of a temporal, and Things of a spiritual Nature; yet there will always be a very great Difference in the Degrees of Attention which the Generality of Men allow to Things Temporal and Things Spiritual, to Things Present and Things Future, to Things in View and Things out of Sight. So that it is usually seen, that the wifer Men are about the Things of this World, the less wife they are about the Things of the next; and as to the Sufficiency of Reaion to be a Guide in Religion, it is much the same Thing with Regard to the generality of the World, whether Reason be Uncapable of framing a compleat Rule of Life, or the Generality be hinder'd by Pleafures or by Attendance on their worldly Affairs, from Employing their Reason to frame it; which will always be the Case of the greatest Part of Mankind.

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In the next place therefore, it is very unfair in those who deny the Need and Expedience of a divine Revelation, to argue in favour of Reason, as if all Mankind were Philosophers, and every one had fufficient Capacity, Leifure and Inclination, to form a Scheme of Duties for the Direction of his own Life. For it is not enough to fay, that there are learned Men in the World, who are able to form such Schemes; fince, whatever their own Ability may be, they have no Right to command Affent and Obedience from others; nor can any one rationally receive and embrace their Schemes without following them through the Chain of Reasonings upon which they are built, and judging whether the Reasonings will support the Schemos; and further, (in case those learned Men differ,) without judging, which of them is in the right, and which in the wrong. A Task, that the Generality of Mankind are as unequal to, as they are to the framing the Schemes themselves. And the Difficulty is still greater, when we find the same Philosopher differing from now advancing one Opinion, and then again leaning to another; at one Time clear and positive, at another Time doubtful and wavering, upon the very fame Point; in which Case, his Opinion on either Side.

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Side, can amount to no more in the Result, than to prove him a Guide very unsit for

the People to follow.

No less unfair is it, to interpret the Zeal that is shewn for Reveal'd Religion, as a Difregard of Morality. This is fo far from being true, that the Advocates of Revelation always confider the whole Body of the Moral Law, as an essential Part of the Christian Institution; which is so far from having abolished Morality, that it enjoins and enforces the Practice of it, upon higher Motives, for more noble Ends, and to greater Degrees of Perfection, than any Scheme of mere Morality ever did, as will be shewn more at large in this Letter. But at the same time it is laid down by them as an undoubted Truth, ' That God has a Right to prescribe the Terms and Conditions upon which he will grant Pardon and Favour to Mankind, 'That he has fully and clearly declared in the Gospel, what those Terms and Conditions are, and, That therefore it is great Presumption and a vain Hope to expect Pardon and Salvation in any other Way. And to fay, in this View, that the Precepts of Morality, as the Product of mere natural Reason, are not a sufficient Guide to Salvation, cannot with any Justice be call'd a Disregard of Morality.

No more can the Reverence we pay to the Revelation of the Scriptures as a divine Direction, be call'd a Difregard of Philo-Jophy as the Product of natural Reason. Persons of Leisure, Capacity and Attention, in any Age, might easily learn from Observation and Experience, that an immoderate Indulgence of the Appetites was hurtful to the Body and Estate, and a like Indulgence of the Passions equally prejudicial to the inward Peace of the Mind: and the outward Order and Regularity of the World. And while Mankind had no other Light, the Philosophers employed their Time worthily, in drawing fuch Rules from Reason and Experience, as being duly observ'd, might make the present Life more happy, or rather, what was the great End they aimed at, less miserable. then, as their Notions concerning another Life were at best confused and impersect, and mere Reason could not inform them, with any Certainty, that this Life, with what-

### PASTORAL LETTER. 99

whatever befals us in it, is a State of Trial and Probation in order to another; they could not tell how to make the Pains, Miferies, and Misfortunes of this World turn to our Account; nor by Consequence could they lay a fure and folid Foundation of Ease and Comfort against all Events. The Confiderations which Philosophy suggests, to support us under the Pressures and Calamities of Life, are fuch as thefe; ' That they are the common Portion of Mankind, That it is possible Time may alter Things for the better, ' That at worst Death will put an End to them, and, 'That Impatience in the mean time will but increase them. The Rules of Revelation are, 'That whatever befals us, is by the Appointment of a wife and good God, . That he fees Afflictions necessary to wear us from the Love of this World; and to turn our Defires and Affections upon a much better, . That he has promised either to deliver us from them, or support us under them, and by that has. given us Ground for a full Trust and comfortable Hope in him; 'That our Patience under the afflicting Hand of God, is a fresh Endearment of us to him, and will be an E 6 Addition Addition to our future Happiness, and,

That in Point of Duration, the Sufferings of this Life are as nothing, when compared with an Eternity of Joy and Glory.

These, we say, are a much better Foundation of Ease and Comfort, than any Rules that the Philosophers either did or could lay down; but in faying this, we do not condemn the Rules of Philosophy upon that or other Points, nor discourage Perfons of Leisure and Capacity from entertaining themselves with them, not only as an agreeable Diversion, but as an useful Exercise of the Mind; some Things in them being truly Great, and what we justly admire in Heathens, as tending to raise the Soul above the Pleasures and Enjoyments of Earth. But then we fav. that the Study of those Writings is become useless and unnecessary to the Generality of People, fince Revelation has furnished us with Rules and Precepts, both Moral and Divine, which are far more perfect in themselves, far more effectual for their several Ends, and establish'd by a far higher Authority, than any of the Rules and Sayings of the Philosophers can pretend to; and

and at the same time are plain and clear to the meanest Capacities.

This points out to us another Advantage which the Enemies of Revelation very unduly take, to advance the Strength and Power of natural Reason in Matters of Religion; and that is, the taking an Estimate of those Powers from Books upon the Subject of Morality, that have been written fince the Christian Revelation was made; many of which are clear and uniform both in the Measures of Duty, and the Motives. to the Performance of it. But this Clearness and Uniformity are really owing to the Light of Revelation, which has given us a far more exact Knowledge than we had before of the Nature and Attributes of God, from whence many of the Duties do immediately flow, and also a far greater Certainty of future Rewards and Punishments, as well as a clear Conviction of the Necessity of Sobriety, Temperance, and other moral Virtues, as Preparations for our Happiness in the next Life, by perfecting our Natures in order to it. And therefore to judge rightly how far Reason is able to be a Guide in Religion,

we must form that Judgment upon the Writings of such of the ancient Philosophers, as appear not to have had any Knowledge either of the Jewish or the Christian Revelation; and then enquire, What Progress they were able to make in the Knowledge of Divine Matters, by the Strength of mere natural Reason, "To what Degrees of Certainty concerning those Matters it could and did carry them, . What Agreement and Uniformity there was among them, in the main and fundamental Doctrines and Duties of Religion, ' What was the natural Tendency of their feveral Doctrines, in order to the promoting of Virtue and Goodness, and, 'What Influence they had in their feveral Ages and Countries, in rectifying the Principles and reforming the Practices of Mankind. For all which Purposes, it is but Justice to them to suppose, that they had as great Strength of Reason and Judgment, as fincere a Defire to find out the Truth, and as great Diligence in enquiring after it, as any of the Enemies of Revelation at this Day can pretend to. And if it shall appear, ' That they were utterly ignorant of many important Points

in Religion, which Revelation has discovered to us, ' That their Knowledge of. many others was dark, uncertain and imperfect, 'That the Differences among them, in Points of the greatest Weight and Moment, were endless and irreconcileable, That many of them taught Doctrines, which directly tend to promote Vice and Wickedness in the World, and, 'That in Fact the Influence they had in rectifying the Notions and reforming the Lives of Mankind, was inconfiderable; If, I fay, these things appear, they will amount to a full Proof, that natural Reason, of itself, is not a sufficient Guide in Matters of Religion.

1. The ancient Philosophers were utterly ignorant of many important Points in Religion, which Revelation has discovered to us.

They were Strangers to the true Account of the Creation of the World, and the Original of Mankind, and to God's Administration of the World, and Intercourse with Mankind, in the most early Ages. One ! Sect of Philosophers held, that the

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World was Eternal, and another, that it was made by Chance; and they who believed it had a Beginning in Time, knew not by what Steps, nor in what Manner it was rais'd into so much Beauty and Order; and so, for want of a sure historical Knowledge concerning this Point, it became a sit Subject for the Fancy and Imagination of the Poets.

They were sensible of a great Degree of Corruption and Irregularity in the Nature of Man, but could not tell from what Cause it proceeded, nor in what State our first Parents came out of the Hands of God, nor by what Means they lost their original Persection. And the want of knowing these Things, leads Men of course into endless Perplexities, how to reconcile the Purity and Persection of God the Creator, to the Uncleanness and Corruption of Man the Being created; and tempts them to suppose, either that the Nature of God is not pure, or that the Soul of Man is not of a divine Original.

Much less could the Light of Nature acquaint them with the Method He has

r Epicureans.

ordain'd and established for the Recovery of lost Man; ' to effect a Reconciliation between God and Man, ' to exercise his Goodness without the Violation of his Iuflice, ' and not only to make the Pardon of Sinners confiftent with the Wildom of his Government, the Honour of his Laws. and his Hatred of Sin, fo as to render their Salvation possible, but to give them the ftrongest Assurances of Pardon and Favour, upon the plain Conditions of Faith and Repentance. These are things that depend wholly upon Revelation; and without the Knowledge of these, Mankind must remain in a perplexed and desponding State, as to the Pardon of Sin, and the Favour of God. The Comfort they would raise from the Mercy and Goodnel's of God is checkt by the Confideration of his Juflice, and nothing is able to fix the guilty Mind in a State of folid and well-grounded Comfort, but an Affurance that the divine Juflice is satisfied, and an express Declaration on the Part of God, upon what Terms and Conditions he will receive the Sinner into Favour.

Then

Then as to the Publick Worship of God; the Light of Nature might in general fuggest to Men the Reasonableness of joining in Worship; but in what manner he would be worshipped, and in what way they might perform a Service that would be acceptable to him, was understood to be a Point which the Wit and Penetration of Man could not fix and determine. Infomuch, that the Founders of States and Kingdoms, who undertook to settle Civil Administrations by the Rules of human Prudence, found it necessary to ground their Schemes of Religion upon pretended Revelations, as the only Way to give them a proper Sanction, and the People an Affurance, that their religious Performances would be accepted.

The Points of Knowledge mentioned under this first Head, are evidently such as the Philosophers were wholly ignorant of, as not falling within the Compass of human Reason in its corrupt State; and the Importance of them to the Comfort and Happiness of Mankind, shews the vast Advantage we receive from Revelation, in removing many Doubts and Difficulties which would otherwise arise concerning the Na-

ture

us the true State of our own Original and Condition, and in acquainting us in the clearest Manner, upon what Terms, and by what Services, we may be sure of his Favour and Acceptance. To all which we may add as another Point above the Reach of human Reason, The comfortable Promise he has made us of supernatural Aid and Assistance in our sincere Endeavours to perform what he has revealed to be his Will, in order to render ourselves acceptable to him.

2. The Knowledge which the Philosophers had of several important Points of Religion, was dark, imperfest and uncertain. Many of them, and those, of the greatest Note, laid it down for a general Maxim, I That all Things were uncertain, I That Truth lay buried in a deep Abys, and, I That the furthest that human Wit and Understanding could go in Search of it, was no more than Probability and Conjecture; and accordingly we find the wisest

Cic. Nat. Deor. 1. 1. Acad. qu. 1. 1. Vid. Minuc. Fel. p. 112. Lact. 1. 3. c. 20. See under the 3d general Head.

among

among them plainly intimating the Need there was of a Divine Revelation, to give Mankind a full and certain Knowledge of their Duty. But supposing them to have been able to lay out all the Duties and Offices of Life in the clearest Manner; that which disabled them from reforming the World and obliging Men to attend to their Duty, was the Uncertainty they were under about the great and only effectual Motives to it; the Immortality of the Soul, and a future Account.

Philosophers upon this Head, not only afferts what every one knows to be true, that the whole Sect of Epicureans disbeliev'd the Soul's Immortality, but adds, That many of the most learned Philosophers were of the same Opinion; and he particularly mentions two of great Note among them; one, who in his Writings had avowedly argued against it, and another who had professedly written three Books to consute it. He tells us further, that though the Stoicks believed that the Soul remain'd after Death for some Time, yet they did not believe it was im-

º Cic. Tusc. q. I. 1.

mortal. And even Socrates and Cicero, who were peculiarly favourable to the Doctrine of the Immortality of the Soul, do yet difcover some Doubt and Uncertainty about it.

his Friends, 'He had good Hope of some Sort of Being, when this Life was at an End;' but after that, he speaks doubtfully, and says, 'Though he should be mistaken, he did at least gain thus much, That the Expectation of it made him less uneasy while he liv'd, and his Error would die with him; 'and he concludes, 'I am going out of the World, and you are to continue in it; which of us has the better Part, is a Secret to every one but God.

And <sup>3</sup> Cicero speaking of the several Opinions concerning the Nature and Duration of the Soul, says, 'Which of these is true, God alone knows; and which is most probable, a very great Question.' And he introduces one, complaining, 'That while he was reading the Arguments for the Immortality of the Soul, he thought himself convinced; but as soon as he laid

Plato in Phæd. 2 In Apol. Socratis.

<sup>3</sup> Cic. Tusc. q. 1. 1.

a fide

afide the Book, and began to reason with himself, his Conviction was gone. All which gave ' Seneca just Occasion to fay, ' That Immortality, however defireable, was rather promis'd than prov'd, by those great Men. And if the Philosophers doubted even of the Existence of the Soul after Death, much less could they pretend to know any thing of the Refurrection of the Body, and a folemn Day of Judgment, and the Sentence that will be finally pronounced upon Good and Bad Men at that So far from this, that the great Day. Argument by which they prove that Death cannot properly speaking be call'd an Evil, is, ' That it either wholly extinguishes our Being, or at least leaves us such a Being as is not subject to Punishment or Misery in another State. And 2 they eas'd the People of those Fears, by exploding the Notion of Infernal Torments prepar'd for the Wicked, as mere Dreams, and Fictions of the Poets.

This Uncertainty about those great and fundamental Truths, was attended with fa-

Tusc. q. l. 1. Sen. ad. Mar c. 19.

#### PASTORAL LETTER. III

tal Effects both in Principle and Practice: In Principle it naturally led Mankind to call in question the Providence, Justice, and Goodness of God, when they observ'd the Prosperity of the Wicked, and the Calamities of the Righteous, without being fore that either of them should suffer or be rewarded in another State; or else to doubt, whether there really was any effential Difference between Virtue and Vice, and whether it did not depend wholly upon the Institution of Men. In Prastice; Hope and Fear are the two Things which chiefly govern Mankind and influence them in their Actions; and they must of course govern and influence more or less, in Proportion to the Certainty there is, that the Things fear'd and hop'd for are real, and the Rewards and Punishments assuredly to be expected. And as the corrupt Inclinations of human Nature will eafily overcome any Fear, the Foundation of which is but doubtful, so those being let loose and freed from the Apprehension of a future Account, will of course carry Men into all Manner of Wickedness. Nor is it sufficient to say, that they are under the Restraint of human Laws:

Laws; fince it is certain, that very great Degrees of Wickedness may both be harbour'd in the Heart and carried into Execution, notwithstanding the utmost that human Authority can do to prevent it.

From hence it appears, how great a Bleffing and Benefit it is to Mankind, that the Gospel-Revelation has given us a full Affurance of the Immortality of the Soul. and of Rewards and Punishments in another Life, according to our Behaviour in this; and not only fo, but has very particularly acquainted us, ' Who shall be our Judge, 'What the Manner and Solemnity of the Judgment, ' What is to be the Rule of Judging, 'What the Sentence that will be pass'd both upon Good and Bad Men, and 'What will be the State of each in Consequence thereof. The certain Expectation of these Things, enforc'd by the Affurance God has given us that he takes Notice of all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions in this Life, in order to that future Account, conduces greatly, or rather is of absolute Necessity, to secure the general Peace and Order of the World, as well as to preserve the Virtue and Innocence of 3. The particular Persons.

2. The Differences among the Philofophers in Points of the greatest Weight and Moment, were endless, and irreconcileable. This is a Truth fo well known, and fo univerfally acknowledged, that those among us who have the greatest Zeal for natural Reason as a sufficient Guide in Religion, will not deny the Fact. A lively Description of which, we find in an ancient Writer of the Church, ' Every Sect of them overthrows all others, in order to eftablish itself, and can allow none to be wife, because by that it would acknowbledge itself to be foolish; and as it overthrows the Rest, so is itself overthrown by the Rest.' And elsewhere, '2 To what End should we fight against those, ' who are destroying one another?' Nor can it be faid, that these Differences were only about Matters of less Consequence; fince it is notorious, that the most important Points in Religion were subjects of the greatest Disputes. While some afferted the Being of a God, others openly deny'd it; and 3 others again ran into the Notion of a

Lact. 1. 3. c. 4. 2—c. 28. 3 Cic. de Nat. Deor. 1. 1.

Multiplicity of Gods, Celestial, Aerial, Terrestrial, Infernal; 1 and as every Country had its peculiar Gods, fo the Philosophers made it a general Rule, that every one should worship the Gods of his own Country. While some (as I have shewn) were willing to believe that the Soul was immortal, and that they should live in a future State, others affirm'd it to be mortal, and to die with the Body: While 2 fome affirm'd that Virtue and Vice, as founded in the Nature of Things, were eternal and unchangeable; it was the Doctrine of others. that nothing was Good or Evil, Just or Unjust, Right or Wrong, otherwise than as the Laws and Customs of particular Countries determin'd: While one 3 Sect affirm'd that Virtue was the fole Good, and its own Reward; another 4 Sect rejecting that Notion in the Case of Virtue in Distress, made the good Things of this Life a necessary Ingredient of Happiness; and a sthird set up Pleasures, or at least Indolence and a

Plato, de Leg. 1. 4. Epict. Ench. c. 38. Cic. de Nat. Deor. 1. 3.—de Leg. 1. 2. 2 Diog. Laert. 1. 2. p. 89, 134, 138. 1. 9. p. 581. 1. 10. p. 671. Max. Tyr. Diff. 1. Sen. Ep. 1. 10. p. 97, 302. 3 Stoicks. 4 Aristotelians. 5 Epicureans. Freedom

Freedom from Pain, as the final Good that Men ought to propose to themselves; (upon which Differences I Tully very justly observes, ' That they who do not agree in stating what is the chief End or Good, must of course differ in the whole System of Precepts for the Conduct of Life.') Again, While many of them thought it reasonable to believe, that the general Order and Government of the World could not be maintain'd without the Superintendence of some superior Power; one whole 2 Sect absolutely deny'd a Providence, 3 others acknowledged no more than a 4 general Providence which did not respect particular Beings; others, who own'd a particular Providence, extended it only to ' greater Matters, while the lefs, in their Opinion. were neglected; others again deny'd the Omniscience of God, which was little less. than the denial of a Providence as to the Effects it ought to have upon the Behaviour of Mankind. And while some talked of

Cic. Acad. qu. 1. i.—de Fin. 1. 5. Epicureans. Aristotelians. 4—Plut. de Pl. Phile 1. 2. c. 3. Diog. Laert. 1. 5. —Arian. Epict. 1. 1. c. 12. Cic. de Nat. Deor. 1. 2. & 3. Cic. Nat. Deor. 1. De Div. 1. 2. De Fato. Min. Fel. p 10. Var.

their Gods taking Vengeance upon the bad and rewarding the Good, in order to deter Men from Wickedness and excite them to Goodness; others exploded the Notion of the Gods being ' pleas'd or displeas'd on any Account, and by that, entirely remov'd out of the Minds of Men the Defire of pleasing and the Fear of displeasing them, and all Thoughts of praying to them or thanking them, for the Benefits they either wanted, or enjoy'd. Upon which, it is justly observ'd by an ancient Christian Writer, That if this Principle of God's being neither pleas'd nor displeas'd, were true, there must be an End of all Religion; fince it leaves no Foundation either for bonouring or fearing the Deity. And yet it is 3 faid to have been the universal Opinion of Philosophers (not only of those who thought that God did not concern himself with human Affairs, but of those who believ'd he did) that he was neither angry with Men, nor would punish them.

These and the other Differences among them which would fill Volumes, are not

Lact. de Ira. Orig. Contra Celf. 1. 4. Lact. de Ira. c. 6. Cic. Offic. 1. 3.

mention'd as any Reproach to the Philosophers in Point of Ability and Understanding; fince it happen'd no otherwise to them, than it always will do to any Number of Men, who in this corrupt State of Things will depend upon themselves alone, in Matters of Religion. But I mention them, to shew the Weakness and Folly of those, who, because the Philosophers now and then indulged themselves in Speculations of a Divine Nature, would fend us to them for a complete and uniform Scheme of Religion; who, from their having laid down many useful Rules, grounded upon the natural Connexion of Things as they appear in daily Experience and Observation, in order to the wife Conduct of human Affairs and our Peace and Happiness in this Life, would infer, that they are therefore proper and sufficient Guides to our Happiness in the next; and who, in reality, under this pretext, are doing all they can to gratify and encourage the voluptuous Part of Mankind, by discharging them from all Regard to the Laws of Christ (which have the Sanction of Divine Authority, and against which there can be no Objection, but that they

are

are too pure for Appetites so much vitiated and deprav'd) and leaving them to form a Religion for themselves out of this or that Philosopher, whose Maxims and Doctrines they can best Relish; the Wisest of which, (how sublime soever some of the Thoughts may seem) were no more than the Imaginations and Conjectures of fallible Men.

But be their Schemes of Religion what they would, these two Things are certain; · That no one Philosopher had more Right than another, to impose his Scheme upon Mankind; and, 'That fetting afide Revelation, no one Person at this Day has any Authority to determine, amidst so many different and contradictory Opinions, which of the Philosophers was in the Right, and which in the Wrong. Upon this Foot therefore the greatest Part of Mankind are left in a State of endless Perplexity, without Ability to determine for themselves, and without any certain Guide on whose Determination they may fafely rely. And this made one of the best and wisest among them fay, ' That Error was fo mix'd with · Truth, and oft-times with fuch likeness

Cic. de Nat. Deor. I. L.

to each other, that there was no way left

to determine the Judgment;' and,

\* 1 That it would be time enough to blame

the Sceptick Philosophy which doubted of

every thing, when either the Rest of the

Philosophers were agreed, or some one

fhould be found who could afcertain the

Truth.' Which shews the great Advantage of a divine Revelation, as well to ascertain our Duty, as to engage our Attention and Regard to it; to give all Men, great and small, learned and unlearned, a sure Rule, and a clear View of all they are to do, and effectually to engage them in a steady and uniform Pursuit of the great End that such a Revelation proposes.

By attending to the Matters wherein the Philosophers differ'd, we see clearly that they were Points which concern'd the very Being of Religion and Virtue; and that those Differences render'd the Motives and Obligations to both, precarious and uncertain. And this shews how unjust the Objection is, which Insidels raise upon this Head, from the different Opinions among Christians, and the several Sects and De-

\* Cic. Academicks.

nominations form'd upon those Differences. As long as Men are Men, and have different Degrees of Understanding, and every one a Partiality to his own Conceptions; it is not to be expected, that they should agree in any one entire Scheme and every Part of it, in the Circumstances as well as the Substance, in the Manner of Things as well as in the Things themselves. The Question therefore is not in general about a Difference in Opinion, which in our prefent State is unavoidable; but about the Weight and Importance of the Things wherein Christians differ, and the Things wherein they agree. And it will appear, that the feveral Denominations of Christians agree both in the Substance of Religion, and in the necessary Enforcements of the Practice of it: ' That the World and all Things in it were created by God, and are under the Direction and Government of his all-powerful Hand and all-feeing Eve: 'That there is an effential Difference between Good and Evil, Virtue and Vice; That there will be a State of future Rewards and Punishments according to our Behaviour in this Life; 'That Christ was a Teacher

a Teacher fent from God, and that his Apostles were divinely inspir'd; 'That all Christians are bound to declare and profess themselves to be his Disciples; 'That not only the Exercise of the several Virtues, but also a Belief in Christ, is necessary in order to their obtaining the Pardon of Sin, the Favour of God, and Eternal Life; That the Worship of God is to be perform'd chiefly by the Heart, in Prayers, Praises, and Thanksgivings; and as to all other Points, ' That they are bound to hve by the Rules which Christ and his Apostles have left them in the Holy Scriptures. Here then is a fixt, certain, and uniform Rule of Faith and Practice, containing all the most necessary Points of Re-Figion, established by a Divine Sanction, embrac'd as fuch by all Denominations of Christians, and in itself abundantly sufficient to preserve the Knowledge and Practice of Religion in the World. As to Points of greater Intricacy, and which require uncommon Degrees of Penetration and Knowledge; such indeed have been Subjects of Dispute among Persons of Study and Learning in the several Ages of the Christian Church & Fs

Church; but the People are not obliged to enter into them, fo long as they do not touch the Foundations of Christianity, nor have an Influence upon Practice. In other Points, it is fufficient that they believe the Doctrines, so far as they find, upon due Enquiry and Examination according to their feveral Abilities and Opportunities, that God has reveal'd them. Now this is a State of Things very different from that of the Heathen World; in which their Teachers differ'd about the most important Points in Religion; and while no one could claim an Authority from God, nor any Right to require an Affent to his Doctrines; the Generality of People had no certain Test to try them by, nor by consequence any Means to deliver themselves out of a Maze of endless Doube and Uncertainty. Which is well express'd by an ancient ' Writer in Answer to the Question, Did the Philosophers then teach nothing that was right? 'Yes, fays he, many

• Things; but their Precepts have no

<sup>·</sup> Weight, because they are human, and

want a divine Sanction.' They are not be-

# PASTORAL LETTER. 123.

liev'd, because 'he who hears, thinks himfelf a Man, as well as he who teaches.

4. The Philosophers taught Doctrines. which directly tend to encourage Vice and Wickedness in the World. Of this fort. were the Notions already mentioned, concerning Providence, and the Omniscience and Omnipresence of God, and their denying that he was either pleas'd or displeas'd with Mankind, and their refolving the Distinctions between Good and Evil into Human Authority and Appointment. Such also was the Doctrine of Fate, or Men's doing every thing thro' Necessity, and not by Choice; which takes away all Virtue and Vice, and leaves no Place for Rewards or Punishments either here or hereafter; and yet this was the avow'd Doctrine of one famous E Sect among them. And the prevalency of this Doctrine of Fate in the Heathen World, together with the pernicious Influence it naturally has upon Virtue and Religion, was the Reason why the ancient Fathers of the Christian Church took for much Pains in their feveral Writings to confute and expose it.

M Stoicks,

Nor did they only hold Principles destructive of Virtue, but also maintain'd Practices of a very vile and corrupt Nature. Plato taught the Expedience and Lawfulness of 2 Exposing Children in particular Cases, and 3 Aristotle also of Abortion; At Athens, the great Seat and Nursery of Philosophers, it was laid down for a Rule. · 4 That Infants which appear'd to be maim'd, should either be kill'd or expos'd; and ' 5 That the Athenians might lawfully invade and enslave any People, who in their Opinion were fit to be made Slaves. 6 Many of the Philosophers maintain'd the Lawfulness of Self-Murder. 7 Not only the Epicureans and others, but even Plato himfelf allow'd Fornication, and which is more shocking, a Community of Wives; and the most famous among them were known not only to approve but practife 8 unnatural Lust. To which we may add the

Plat. de Rep. 1. 5. 2 Casting out to perish.

3 Arist. Po. 1. 7. c. 16. 4 Ibid. 1. 7. c. 17. 5—Ibid.

1. 2. c. 14. Arist. Pol. 1. 7. c. 16. Cie. Fin. 1. 1.

Sen. Ep. 12, 28, 58, 70. 7 Cic. pro Cælio. Plat.

Conviv.—de Leg. 1. 8. Athen. 1. 13. Athen.

1. 13. Lucian. de Amore. Plutarch. de Lib. Educ.

Cic. Tusc. q. 1. 4.

Cynicks, who laying aside the natural Restraints of Shame and Modesty, committed the Acts of Lust like brute Beasts, openly, and in the Sight of the Sun; and the Stoicks, who held that no "Words or Speech of any kind ought to be avoided or censur'd, as

filtby and obscene.

These are Principles and Doctrines, by which many of the Philosophers, and those of greatest Note, let Men loose from the Obligations of Duty, and gave them full Liberty to indulge their brutal Appetites, and degrade human Nature into that of Beafts, while they were filling their Heads with fine Notions and exalted Speculations. And as these Indulgences, so agreeable to the Corruptions of Nature, plainly account for that Zeal which is shewn for Reason and Philosophy as our best Guides in Religion; fo the great Objection against the Gospel Revelation is, that it expresly forbids Uncleanness of all kinds, whether in Thought or Deed, as that which above all other things poisons and corrupts the Soul, and makes it utterly unfit for the spiritual Joys and Delights of the next World; for

which the pure Precepts of the Gospel, and the daily Practice of them, are designed to

prepare us.

5. In Fact, the Influence which the ancient Philosophers had in reforming Mankind, was inconfiderable. Idolatry was univerfally practifed throughout the Heathen World, and the Worship of their Gods confifted of the most filthy, abfurd, and abominable Rites: "Strumpets running up and down the Streets naked, with obscene Speeches and wanton Gestures: 2 Men inflaming themselves with Wine, and after that in the Dark fatisfying their Lust promiscuously among a Number of Women: Temples erected to a 3 Goddess as the Patroness of Lust, and she ministred unto by lewd Women, who proftituted themfelves before her, and dedicated their Gainto her; with other Instances of Obscenity, too gross to be mention'd, and yet avowedly made a Part of their Religious Rites. And it is not to be wonder'd, that Unclearness of almost every kind was freely and openly practis'd among them, when their

<sup>\*</sup> Floralia.

<sup>2</sup> Bacchanalia.

<sup>3</sup> Venus

Worship consisted of it, and their ' Philofophers taught it both by their Doctrine and their Practice. The Oblation of Human Sacrifices to their Gods was frequently practis'd; nor was their own Offspring spared upon some Occasions. Nothing could be more cruel and barbarous, than to take Pleafure in feeing Men murder and destroy one another, which yet was avowedly practis'd in their publick Shews, and Persons were train'd up to that inhuman Exercise, and permitted to hire themselves out to the Work; and it is affirm'd by 2 one who wrote an entire Discourse upon the Subject, that even War itself did not occasion so great a Destruction of Mens Lives, as those Shews which they instituted for publick Diversion. Nor, in private Life, can we reasonably hope or expect to find among them the great Virtues of Love, Meekness and Forgiveness, when we find 3 Socrates declaring it neither unjust nor revengeful, to rejoice in the Calamities of our Enemies; and & Cicero expresly approving and professing Re-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> See before, p. 124. <sup>2</sup> Lipsii Saturn. l. 1. c. 12. <sup>3</sup> Plato, Phileb. <sup>4</sup> Cic. de Offic. l. 3. Tusc. q. l. 3. Ep. ad Attic. l. q.

venge; and Aristotle speaking of Meekness, not only as a Defect of the Mind, and as carrying in it too great a Disposition to forgive, but calling the patient enduring of

Reproach, the Spirit of a Slave.

When our Saviour came into the World, and for fome time before, human Knowledge of all kinds, and particularly the Study of Philosophy, was cultivated and improv'd in the Roman Empire, with the greatest Application, and by the ablest Hands. But how little Effect either theirs or the Writings of the Greek Philosophers had upon the Generality of Mankind, may be learnt from St. Paul's Account of the State of the Heathen World, and the Cautions he gives the Christian Converts against their wicked and abominable Practices. \* This I fay therefore, and testify in the Lord, that we henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the Vanities of their Mind; Having the Understanding darkned, being alienated from the Life of God, thro' the Ignorance that is in them, because of the Blindness of their Hearts; Who being past feeling, bave given themselves over unto Lascivious-

Arist. Eth. 1. 4. c. 11. Ephel. iv. 17, 18, 19.

ness, to work all uncleanness with Greediness. And again, I Have no Fellowship with the unfruitful Works of Darkness, but rather reprove them; For it is a Shame even to speak of those Things which are done of them in seeret, i. e. in the Celebration of their 2 Rites and Mysteries, which was accompanied with all manner of Lewdness. And in his Epistle to the 3 Colossians, Mortify therefore your Members which are upon Earth, Fornication, Uncleanness, inordinate Affection, evil Concupiscence, and Covetousness which is Idolatry; for which things sake the Wrath of God cometh upon the Children of Disobedience; in the which ye also walked some time when ye liv'd in them. Agreeably to this, \* St. John tells us, that except the Professors of Christianity, the whole World lay in Wickedness, and ' St. Paul, speaking of the Gentile World in general as living under the Law of Nature, and having mention'd unnatural Luft, as common among them, goes on and tells us, That they were fill'd with Unrighteousness, Fornication, Wickedness, Co-

vetousness,

Ephef. v. 11, 12. 2 See p. 126. 3 Col. iii. 5, 6, 7. 4 1 John v. 19. 5 Rom. i. 26, 27, 29, 30, 31.

wetousness, Maliciousness; full of Envy, Murder, Debate, Deceit, Malignity, Whisperers, Backbiters, Haters of God, Despitesful, Proud, Boasters, Inventers of evil Things, disobedient to Parents, without Understanding, Covenant-breakers, without natural Affection, implacable, unmerciful. St. Peter also exhorting the Gentiles who had been converted to Christianity, to live as became their new Profession, tells them, that the Time past of their Life may suffice them to have wrought the Will of the Gentiles, in which they walked in Lasciviousness, Lusts, Excess of Wine, Revellings, Banquettings, and abominable Idolatries.

And, in Truth, between the Corruptions of human Nature, and the Inability of the Philosophers to reform them, we are not to wonder that the Heathen World had grown by degrees to such a Pitch of Wickedness. 'The Philosophers in the several Ages were but few; 'The Numbers who repair'd to them for Instruction, were small in Comparison, and their Instructions confin'd to their own Scholars, who were usually Persons only of Fortune and Distinctions

tion; 'The generality of the People had no Opportunity to be instructed by them, nor if they had, were they able to understand and enter into the many dark and abfiruse Notions of their Instructors; ' The publick Rites of Worship, which the People did attend, confifted wholly of the Ceremonies performed by their Priests, without any moral Instructions or Lessons of Duty; Though the Philosophers had been more clear, few of them had Schemes of Religion and Duty, or any more than fcatter'd Notions of Morality, added to some private and fingular Tenets to distinguish them from other Sects: ' Tho' they had given Schemes entire and uniform, they had not fufficient Authority either to command Attention, or require Obedience; Or whatever Authority any one had, it was greatly diminish'd by the endless Difputes among the Philosophers themselves; And tho' they had been qualified to Teach in all other Respects, little Fruit was to be expected from Teaching, where it was not accompanied with good Living. Which last Defect is noted by Tully in this remarkable Paffage; ' Scarce any of the Philofophers, fophers, fays he, are form'd in Mind and Manners, according to the Dictates of Reason: Scarce any, who do not make

· their Institutions rather an Ostentation of

· Knowledge, than a Rule of Life; Scarce

any, who obey themselves, and are go-

vern'd by their own Precepts.' And so,
Aristotle, long before, represented the

Scholars of the Philosophers, 'As learning to wrangle, rather than to live, and being

on more better'd by the moral Lessons

of their Master, than Sick-Men would

be by the Discourses of their Physician

without taking his Prescriptions.' To the same Purpose, <sup>3</sup> Quintilian speaks of the Philosophers of his own Time, <sup>6</sup> That

the most notorious Vices were skreen'd

under that Name; and that they did not

· labour to maintain the Character of Phi-

· lofophers by Virtue and Study, but con-

ceal'd very vicious Lives under an austere

· Look and a different Habit from the rest

of the World.

But there is yet another Way of judging what the State of Religion in any Coun-

<sup>2</sup> Cic. Tufc. qu. 1. 2. <sup>3</sup> Quintil. Inft. 1. 1. Præf. 2 Arist. Eth. 1. 2. c. 3-

try

try is like to be, where Natural Reason is their only Guide; and that is, from the Notions and Practices that have been found among People who were unknown to the Ancients, by the later Discoverers of Countries, and by others who have travelled into those Countries. A Collection of that sort has been lately made out of Books of Travels and other authentick Accounts, by a faithful and judicious 'Hand; and to let you see more clearly and at one View how absurd and abominable they were, I have here reduc'd them to their several Heads, of Worship, Dostrine and Prastice.

As to their WORSHIP; it may be truly said in general, that Idolatry has been
sound in almost every Country that has been
discover'd, and, in many of them Rites of
Worship very wicked and abominable. In
some, they were perform'd by Women,
who in performing them laid aside all natural Shame and Modesty; and in sothers,
Women prostituted themselves for the
Maintenance of their Idol, and in Honour

Millar, Propagation of Christianity, c. 7. Formofa, and the Philippine Islands. Bisnagar and Natinga in the East-Indies.—Camdu, in Tartary.

of it. In ' some Places, the People cut off Pieces of their own Flesh and threw them to their Idol, and in a many others they were found to offer buman Sacrifices, and vast Numbers of them at a Time. The Objects of their Worship were the Sun, Moon and Stars, the four Elements, the several Quarters of the Earth, Apes, Elephants, Serpents, Vipers, Dragons, Tygers, Herbs, Trees, Birds, Fishes, Mountains; and in many Places Evil Spirits. And, together with their Idolatrous Worship, Sorcery, Divination, and Magick, were found to be common among them.

Among their DOCTRINES, and Heads of Belief, were found these that follow.

Two Gods, one of Heaven, the other of Earth; Two Sorts of Gods, Dæmons

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Bisnagar and Nasinga. <sup>2</sup> Ceylon, Mexico, Peru, Terrasirma, Virginia. <sup>3</sup> Tartary, Philippine Islands, Guinea: Ausico and Jagos and Monomotapa, (all in Africa) Zocotara, an Island near Africa, Chili, Peru, Terrasirma, Canada, Florida, Hispaniola, Virginia. <sup>4</sup> Ceylon. <sup>5</sup> Tonquin, in the East-Indies. <sup>6</sup> Goa. <sup>7</sup> Ceylon. <sup>8</sup> Congo and Angola, in Africa. <sup>9</sup> Guinea. <sup>10</sup> Ceylon, Java, Philippine Islands, Æthiopia, Virginia. <sup>11</sup> Tartary, China, Terrasirma, Brasil, Canada, Granada, Hispaniola, Florida, Virginia, New-England. <sup>12</sup> Tartary. <sup>13</sup> Japán.

to be fear'd, and Conquerors and Benefactors to be honour'd; 'Several Gods prefiding over several Quarters of the Earth; One God above the Rest, becoming so, by sirst passing thro' a Multitude of Bodies; Gods subject to various Changes, and limited to certain Times of Government; Providence concerning itself only about the great Affairs of the World; 'The Transmigration of human Souls into the Bodies of Beasts; 'Pagods eating and drinking like Men; 'The Souls of Men, after Death, needing Meat and Drink, and other Accommodations of this Life.

Many PRACTICES have been found among them, that are abominable; 8 Women burning themselves with their Husbands, when dead; 9 The chief Servants of a Prince kill'd at his Death, to attend him in another World; 10 Eating Men's Flesh, and Shambles for selling it; 11 Sucking up the Blood of wounded and dying

Formosa. <sup>2</sup> Siam. <sup>3</sup> Malabar. <sup>4</sup> Malabar, Ceylon, Japan, Florida. <sup>5</sup> Indians, Tartars, Florida. <sup>6</sup> The Bramins. <sup>7</sup> Tartary, Guinea, Terrasirma, Canada. <sup>8</sup> East-Indies, Guinea. <sup>9</sup> Guinea, Terrasirma. <sup>10</sup> Jagos (in Africa) Brazil, Hispaniola. <sup>14</sup> Tartary.

Persons; 'Feasting upon the Bodies of their Captives; 'Having a Number of Wives and Concubines, and putting away Wives at Pleasure; 'Exposing and killing their Children, if born under an unhappy Planet, or 'born before the Mother was of such an Age, or 'if the Parents sound themselves over-charged'.

These, and the like Instances of Corruption in Worship, Doctrine, and Practice, which have prevail'd, and do still prevail, in feveral Parts of the Heathen World. may further shew the Insufficiency of Natural Reason to be a Guide in Religion, and into what monstrous Opinions and Pragtices whole Nations may be led, where that is their Guide, without any Help from Re-Nor will it take off the Force velation. of this Argument, to fay, that these were owing to an undue Use of their Reason, which is in Effect to beg the Question; or that the Measure of Reason they had was low and imperfect, fince they appear'd to

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Canada. <sup>2</sup> Almost every where in Pagan Countries. <sup>3</sup> Ceylon. <sup>4</sup> Formosa. <sup>5</sup> China. <sup>6</sup> More Instances of the like Kind may be seen in Mr. Lock's Essay. 1. 1. c. 3. S. 9.

be skilful and dextrous enough in Worldly Matters, in the Arts of annoying their Neighbours, and defending themselves against Incursions, in entring into Leagues for their mutual Defence, and conducting the ordinary Affairs of Life according to the Manners and Customs of their feveral Countries. Nor are the Abfurdities in Religion that have been found among them, greater than those that have been found among the most polite Nations before the Publication of the Gospel; which are a joint Proof, that no Age or Country, be it rude or civiliz'd, instructed or uninstructed in Arts and Sciences, infected or uninfected with Plenty and Luxury, is fecur'd by mere natural Reason against falling into the groffest Errors and Corruptions in Religion.

Hitherto, you have seen the pernicious Errors and wicked Practices into which the World has fall'n both in ancient and later Days, notwithstanding the Light of Natural Reason, and the Lessons of Philosophers. But as the Christian Institution in its Nature and Tendency is far better calcu-

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See before, P. 126.

lated for the Reformation of Mankind, than any Teaching or Discipline the World had in the Days of Heathenism; so in Fact it has had a far greater Effect in the Advancement of true Religion, and the Reformation of the Lives and Manners of Men. Not to infift upon the exalted Degrees of Purity and Perfection to which Christianity rais'd fo many of its first Professors, ' their Contempt of the World, ' their wonderful Courage and Patience under Perfecution, ' their Mortifications and Self-Denials, ' their fervent Love and Charity and Devotion, 'not, I say, to insist upon these, tho' the true and genuin Effects of Christianity; because it may be said, they were Effects of an extraordinary kind, and wrought only upon particular Persons; let us take a View of it; not as it was embrac'd by fingle Perfons or Families, but as it became the receiv'd Religion of whole Countries, and see what Effects it had among them. And it is univerfally true, that wherever Christianity prevail'd, Oracles ceas'd, Idols were destroy'd, and the Worship of the true God established. And whereas the Heathen Worship, as we have

have feen, confifted of the Sacrifices of Beafts and Men, and was accompanied with many foolish, cruel, and impure Rites, Christianity banish'd all these, and whereever it was receiv'd, did establish a Worthip fuitable to the pure and spiritual Nature of God, a Worship of the Heart, confifting of Prayers, and Praifes and Thankfgivings, to him who is the Author of our Being, and under whose daily Protection we live, and who bestows upon us all the good Things we enjoy. And there is no Christian Country, wherein this reafonable Service is not folemnly performed by Ministers, and attended by the People; to which, and to the Instructions and Exhortations of Christian Preachers, it is to be afcrib'd, that the Knowledge of the true God, and the Duty we owe him, is preserv'd to such a Degree upon the Minds of the Generality of the People; and that several Vices which were not only practis'd but publickly allowed in the Times of Heathenism, are scarce known, and never nam'd wihout Abhorrence, in Christian Countries, Nor can it be faid, with any Colour of Reason or Truth, that the general Order, G 2 Regu-

Regularity, and the Sense of Duty, which is found in Christian Countries at this Day, compar'd with the Cruelties, Diforders, and Excesses of all kinds, that are generally practis'd in Heathen Nations, is not owing to the Christian Institution and Worship, and to the Certainty of future Rewards and Punishments that Christ brought to Light; the Sense of which is preserv'd upon the Minds of the People by fuch publick Teaching. And though fo great is the Corruption of human Nature, that notwithstanding those Means of Instruction and those Restraints from Wickedness, many Disorders and Excesses are practis'd in Christian Countries; it is sufficient to our present purpose, ' That if those Means and Restraints were remov'd, the Excesses would evidently be far greater and more general than they are; ' That the Commission of them among Christians, is by far less frequent, and is attended with much more Caution and Shame than among Heathens; 'That besides those general Influences of Christianity, such Excesses are in fome Measure balanced by the extraordinary Degrees of Piety, Purity, and Exactness

ness of Life and Manners, which are obferv'd by Multitudes of People in every Christian Country; ' That the Design of the Christian Institution was not to force Men to be good, but only to propose fit Motives and proper Encouragements and Affistances to make them so; and our Saviour himself supposes that in his Kingdom here upon Earth there will always be ' Tares growing up with the Wheat (a Mixture of good and bad ) till he himfelf shall make the final Separation. Tho' his Kingdom is not of this World, it is in it; and it is a very unfair Inference, that because Wickedness is found in Christian Countries, therefore Christianity has fail'd of its End.

III. A Divine Revelation was not only Expedient, but highly Needful, to be a sure Guide in Matters of Religion. This follows from the particulars which have been treated of under the last Head, in Relation to the ancient Philosophers. For it is agreed on all Hands, that the most successful Efforts of mere Natural Reason, towards the Discovery of divine Truths and the Duties to be performed by us, with our Obligations

to perform them, were made by the Philofophers. And, if they, after all their Searches, could never tell in what manner God was to be worship'd, nor by what Means Sinners might be reconcil'd to him, and recover his favour; 'If they could never come to a certain Knowledge concerning the Immortality of the Soul and future Rewards and Punishments, which are the principal Motives to the Performance of our Duty, and the only Motives that can make it regarded, by the Generality of Mankind; ' If the Differences among the Philosophers concerning Points of the greatest Importance in Religion, were fo many, and fo eagerly purfu'd by the several Sects, that instead of informing Mankind in their Duty, they perplex'd and distracted them, and at last left them under greater Uncertainties than they were before; while no one had more Authority than another to prescribe a fix'd Scheme of Duty; ' If many of the Philosophers mix'd Precepts of Vice with their Precepts of Virtue; and, 'If in Fact under their Direction and Discipline, the Heathen World and the Generality of Mankind in their feveral

veral Ages, remain'd in a State of gross Idolatry, Uncleanness, Impiety, and Immorality of all kinds; It follows, that either Mankind must remain irrecoverably in a State of Ignorance and Corruption, or that there must be some divine Revelation,

to help them out of it.

And, in Truth, it is very abfurd to suppofe, That either Philosophy, or any thing but a divine Revelation could do it. The Philosophers plainly saw a great Degree of Darkness and Degeneracy in the Mind of Man; their Sense of which is well express'd by " Tully, " If, says he, Nature had fo fram'd us, as to give us a full and perfect View of her, and an Abi-Ity to follow her as our Guide, then Mankind would have needed no other Feacher: But now, the Light she has given us is no more than little Sparks, which we quickly extinguish by corrupt Lives and perverse Opinions, so that the true Light of Nature is no where to be ' found.' And then he goes on, and fays, There are in our Minds the Seeds of Virtue, by which Nature would conduct

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2 Cic. Tufc. qu. 1. 3. Præf.

us to Happiness, if they were allow'd ' to grow up. But now, no fooner are we born, but we fall into a wretched · Depravity and Corruption of Manners and Opinions.' But though the Philofophers clearly faw this Corruption and Depravity, how could they find a Cure for it, when they knew not the Cause of it? The Recovery of Mankind depended wholly upon the Will and Pleasure of God, and the Method of it was not to be known but by Revelation from him. The Means whereby it was to be wrought, was a Supernatural Affistance; which being his own free Gift, could not be made known and enfur'd by any other Hand. And therefore we find two of the greatest Philosophers, Socrates and Plato, despairing of the Recovery of Mankind out of a State of Error and Corruption, without some extraordinary Affistance from God. \* Socrates speaking to the Athenians of himself, tells them, 'That when he is gone, they will fall into an irrecoverable State, un-6 less God shall take care of them, and fend them another Instructor.' And

Education among the Athenians, says, That in such a state of Things, whatever is kept right and as it ought to be, must be effected by a divine Interposition." And elsewhere, he introduces one of the Scholars of Socrates, complaining how difficult it is to discover the Truth by human Reason, but yet acknowledging it to be every one's Duty to employ it, and to rely upon it, "Unless one could find some more sure and safe Pilot, such as a divine Direction would be."

But we will suppose, what is far from being so, that one or other of the Philosophers had in their several Writings discover'd the Whole of Religion; this would not by any means have render'd a Divine Revelation needless, because whatever human Reason pretends to discover, must be judg'd by human Reason whether it be true or false, and it was not likely the generality of People should be able to make such a judgment, since there was scarce any one Point in which the Philosophers themselves did not oppose and contradict one

De Republ. 1. 6. Plato in Phæd.

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another

another, while no one pretended to have any higher Guide than his own Reason, nor by consequence any right to advance and establish his own Notions in opposition to all the rest. So that, in this Case, it is manifest there would still have been wanting a Superior Authority to give a Sanction to some one Scheme, which could only be given, either immediately by God, or by fome Person who gave evident Testimonies of his coming from God; and none of the Philosophers pretending to this, Mankind were left to be tofs'd about by contrary Waves without either Pilot, or Star, or Compass, to bring them to their Harbous. Some of the Philosophers had indeed an implicit Submission paid to their Dictates, but that was only from their own Scholars, who thought themselves bound to maintain the Doctrines of their Sect as such, though without any Pretence of divine Authority in the Founder. But the Case was otherwife with our Saviour: He is faid by the \* Evangelists to teach with Authority, and to teach with Power; and he had a Right fo to do, because he prov'd by his Mira-Mat. vii. 29. Luke iv. 32.

cles that he had a Commission from God, and by that was fully empower'd to declare the Will of God, and to deliver to Mankind a fixt, certain, and indispensible Rule

of Duty.

IV. Mankind are oblig'd to Enquire, whether any Revelation has been made, and what Evidences there are of its coming from God. If they believe they are the Creatures of God, they must think themselves bound to pay Adoration to him as their Creator, and cannot but be concern'd to know in what manner he will be worship'd, and what is the Duty and Homage that he requires ar their Hands. If they believe that they are dependent Creatures, and need the Favour and Protection of God, they cannot but defire to know in what way they may most please him, and what are the furest Means of obtaining his Favour: If they believe, that God governs the World, and that they live under his Providence, they cannot but defire the best Light that is to be had, from his own Declarations and the Examples of former Times, into the Rules of his Providence, and the ordinary Methods of his Dealings with Mankind: If G 6 they

they believe a State of future Rewards and Punishments, according to their Behaviour in this Life, they cannot but defire to know with the utmost certainty and assurance, what the Behaviour is which will fecure the one, and avoid the other: and of all thefe things there can be no knowledge or affurance equal to that which God himfelf gives. So that, while Men, out of a Zeal for what they call Natural Religion, are unconcern'd whether God has made any Revelation of his Will or not, they violate the Laws of Nature in a double respect; First, by resisting that natural Impression which has always carried Men to Enquire after the Declarations of God's Will; and then, by an obstinate unconcernedness for their own Safety and Welfare, contrary to the great and fundamental Law of Nature, Self-Prefervation.

No one who believes there is a God, and that he is a Being of Infinite Power, Wifdom, and Knowledge, can doubt whether he can make a Revelation of his Will to Mankind, which may be fully attested to come from him, by Miracles, and Predictions of future Events, and the like undeniable

niable Testimonies of a divine Mission. To affirm this, would not only be in effect to deny a God, but to contradict the univerfal Belief that we find in all Ages and Nations, of divine Communications with Men; which shews at least the general Sense of Mankind, as to the possibility of the thing. And certainly, confidering the false and very corrupt Notions the World was fal'n into, concerning God, and his Worship, and the other Duties we owe him, notwithstanding the Examples of some good Men in the successive Ages, who retained upon their Minds a Sense of Religion, and their Endeavours to convince Mankind of the natural Connection there is between Virtue and Happiness, Vice and Misery; in such Circumstances, it was very agreeable to the natural Notions we have of the divine Goodness and Wisdom, to suppose that He would make a farther Revelation to Mankind, which might give them a clearer Knowledge, and a stronger Sense, of Duty; unless we will suppose that he had utterly abandon'd them.

They who think it had been most agreeable to the divine Wisdom and Goodness, to have given Mankind one certain Rule from the beginning, which should have been a sufficient Guide to all suture Generations, and that the Need of a new Revelation implies a want of Knowledge and Forefight in God; feem to forget, that Man was created a Free Agent, and as fuch must have it in his Power to fall into a state of Degeneracy and Corruption. And when the generality of Mankind were actually fal'n into that State, the acquainting them by a special Revelation how they might be deliver'd out of it (how their Natures might be rectified, and themselves reftor'd to the Favour of God,) could not furely be any Derogation to the Characters of Wisdom and Goodness. As well may we charge a Physician with want of Skill, for not treating the Sound and the Sick by one and the same Rule, and while he is finding out Remedies, and prescribing Regulations, to restore a Constitution wellnigh ruin'd by Debauchery and Excess, accuse him for suffering the Patient, who was in a State of Liberty and Freedom, to run into those pernicious Courses: As well may a Prince, who proclaims Conditions of Pardon

# PASTORAL LETTER. TSI

don and Favour to his rebellious Subjects, be charged with want of Goodness, because he did not chain them up from their Cradles, and lay them under an utter Ina-

bility to rebel.

I cannot forbear in this place to take notice of the extreme Vanity and Presumption of those, who think themselves at liberty to difregard the Gospel-Revelation, till God shall think fit to satisfy them, for what reason He did not make it sooner, and why not to all Mankind at once. As if He were accountable to us for His Proceedings and Dispensations, and we at liberty to refuse the Benefits or Deliverances He fends, because they come not at the time or in the manner that we judge most pro-Such Persons may as well ask, Why he made us Men and not Angels? Why he did not bring us into the World with the perfect use of our Reason? Why he did not give to all Men the same Capacity and Leifure to know and learn their Duty? Why he has appointed different Degrees of Happiness in the next Life? - If indeed it appeared, that God would judge Men for the Transgression of any Duty which they

did not and could not know to be their Duty, and that he would make them accountable for not being influenc'd by Motives which he had never acquainted them with; it would be difficult to reconcile fuch a Proceeding to the divine Justice. But fince the contrary to this is true, and it is certain God will not punish Men for invincible Ignorance; surely He is at liberty to dispense Extraordinary Favours at what Times, and in what Measures, to what Nations and to what Persons he thinks fit; and there can be no doubt, but such Persons and Nations are bound to receive them with all the Gratitude and Thankfulness that is due from Creatures to their Creator. Are we then to quarrel with God, that He raises us to greater Degrees of Perfection, in order to advance us to greater Degrees of Happiness and Glory? Can there be a more flagrant Instance of Perverseness, than to refuse his Favours, for the very reason which ought to increase our Thankfulness for them, namely, that he vouchfafes them to Us, and not to Others? As to the Heathens, though the Light of Reason is but dim, yet they who have no better Light to walk by, and who

who honestly make use of that, as the only Guide God has given them, cannot fail to be mercifully dealt with by infinite Justice and Goodness. This is the foundation of St. Paul's reasoning upon the State of the Gentile World, That God did not then leave bimfelf without witness: the regular returns of the Seasons of the Year, and the former and latter Rain coming at their fet times, and bleffing them with plentiful Harvests, were visible Evidences of his Providence and Goodness. And tho', notwithflanding these Evidences, they fell into Idolatry, yet because those were times of Ignorance, in which they had no other Guide but the Light of Nature, God winked at them, or bore with them, and did not let loofehis Vengeance, utterly to destroy them. But now (upon the Publication of the Gospel, as St. Paul goes on) be commandeth all men every where to repent; Because be bath appointed a day in which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he bath ordained; whereof he bath given Assurance unto all men, in that be bath raised bim from the dead. And they who have received

<sup>\*</sup> Acts xiv. 16, 17, compar'd with xvii. 30, 31.

this express Command from God, and do not regard it, or, in other Words, they who enjoy the clear Light of the Gospel, and perversly reject it; instead of being entitl'd to Mercy, have their Guilt greatly aggravated, 'by shutting their Eyes against the Light he has given, 'by defeating the Measures he has ordain'd for their Salvation; 'by rejecting a Dispensation on no other account, but because it is too pure and perfect, and 'by refusing the Happiness that God offers, for no other reason, but because they will not come up to the Terms and Conditions upon which he offers it.

No less unreasonable are they, who plead that if a Revelation is to be regarded, it ought to be made to every Person, or at least to every Age. For a Rule of Duty is one and the same, to all Persons and in all Ages; and when a standing Test is once given to distinguish Truth from Error, it is equally a Test at all Times, and in all Places; supposing it to be convey'd to them with sufficient Evidence of its coming from God. That this is the case of the Gospel-Revelation, I have shewn you at large in my first Letter; and after God has given such

fuch Evidence as is abundantly sufficient to fatisfy an ingenious and unprejudiced Mind, it is very unreasonable to suppose that He is obliged to make every Age and every Country a Scene of new Miracles, only to fatisfy the Difingenuity and Obstinacy of those, who have already receiv'd sufficient Evidence, and yet will not be convinced. This is the foundation of what our ' Saviour favs in the Parable of the Rich Man, If they hear not Moses and the Prophets, neither will they be perfuaded tho' one rose from the dead. The Spirit of Infidelity is proof against all Arguments and Conviction; and the Fews are a lasting Testimony, how little it avails to be Eye-witnesses to Miracles, when Men have once resolved to be Infidels.

Since then a Revelation from God is not only possible, but also probable, and very agreeable to the divine Wisdom and Goodness; and we live in a Country which avowedly acknowledges and embraces the Gospel-Revelation; and it is certain, in sact, that the same has been acknowledged and embraced by many other Countries for above

Luke xvi. 31.

Sixteen Hundred Years, and still continues to be so, as the great Foundation of Men's Happiness both temporal and eternal; to say in this Case, that they are not obliged, according to their several Abilities and Opportunities, to enquire whether such a Revelation has been really made, and what grounds there are to believe that it came from God, is to say, that they are at liberty to renounce all the Rules of Reason and Prudence, as well as all Concern for the Sasety and Welsare of Body and Soul.

V. It is the Duty of Mankind to Receive for their Guide whatever Revelation comes from God; and also to receive it whole and entire. What the Evidences are of the Gospel-Revelation's coming from God, I have shewn at large in my former Letter; and am so far from desiring Men to rest implicitly upon the Belief of any Age or Country, that the Defign of the last head is to convince them of the Obligation they are under, to make a strict Enquiry into those Evidences, and to see whether they be fuch as are fit for a reasonable and impartial Mind to acquiesce in. And if upon Examination, the Evidences of the Fact appear appear to be full and strong, and nothing be found in the Matter reveal'd, that is a manifest Contradiction in itself, or evidently inconsistent either with the divine Perfections, or with our natural Notions of Good and Evil; then I must add, that we are bound to receive it as a Rule of Faith and Practice, notwithstanding any colourable Suggestions to the contrary; because we are fatisfied that it comes from God, who has a Right to give us a Rule, and who can give no Rule but what is true, and just, and good. So argues an accurate ' Reafoner, upon this Head: ' Since God, in giving us the Light of Reason, has not thereby tied up his own hands from affording us, when he thinks fit, the Light of Revelation, in any of those Matters wherein our Natural Faculties are able to give a probable Determination; Revela-' lation, where God has been pleas'd to give it, must carry it against the probable Cone jectures of Reason. Because the Mind onot being certain of the Truth of that it does not evidently know, but only yielding to the probability that appears in it,

' is bound to give up its Affent to fuch a

· Testimony, which, it is satisfied, comes

from one who cannot err, and will not

deceive. For the same reason, we are not at liberty to admit some part of a Divine Revelation and reject the reft; we may not, for Instance, receive the Improvements it makes in the moral Law, and, stopping there, reject or difregard the Methods it provides for the Redemption of Mankind, nor the Ordinances and Institutions it lays down for the Peace and Edification of the Church and every particular Member of it, nor, in general, any thing that it requires either to be believ'd or practis'd: Because, if the whole appear to come from God, every part has equally the Stamp of divine Authority; and he who rejects any part, may for the same reason reject the whole.

And while I am shewing you the Obligation you are under to receive the Gospel-Revelation, it will be necessary that I caution you against Scepticism, or an unreasonable Difficulty in believing, and suspending the Assent of the Mind after it has receiv'd the proper grounds of Conviction. Such Scepticks

Scepticks are all they, who will not be content with those forts of proof which things are capable of; for Instance, will not believe things which were done before their own Time, because they did not see or hear them, or because they are not prov'd to them by Mathematical Demonstration, of which all historical Facts whatsoever are in their nature equally uncapable. Such also are they, who are fo partial in giving their Affent, as to believe the Histories of Julius and Augustus Casar without the least Scruple, but are full of Doubts about the History of Jesus Christ, tho' supported by Evidences far more clear and numerous. To these may well be applied, what was said by an excellent \* Writer, in relation to this Sceptical Humour: 'Those who will pretend fuch kind of Grounds for their difbelief of any thing, will never be able to persuade others, that the true cause why they do not give their Assent, is not because they have no Reason for it, but because they have no Mind to it.' We are naturally very uneasy under a state of Sustence about any thing we like and care in

Dr. Wilk. Nat. Rel. p. 26.

earnest to pursue; and Men's willingness to continue in suspence as to the Truth of the Gospel-Revelation, is a certain sign that it is a Business they do not like, nor care for. And altho' this is not downright Insidelity, yet it makes Men indifferent about Religion, and unactive in their Christian Course, and takes off the force and influence of suture Rewards and Punishments, almost as much as Insidelity itself.

VI. Such and so many, are the Excellencies of the Gospel-Revelation, that every wife and good Man must WISH it to be true, whether we consider the Ends it proposes, or the Means for attaining those Ends.

The great Ends it proposes, are, 'The Persection of human Nature, and the Happiness of Mankind, 'To remove us from the state of Brutes, and advance us to the persection of Angels, and, upon the whole, 'To lay a sure soundation for our Peace and Happiness, both Temporal and Eternal.

The means it uses for attaining those great Ends are of several sorts. For Instance; Fierceness and Cruelty, and an unrestrain'd enjoyment of sensual Pleasures, being

being the distinguishing Characters of the Brutal Nature; the Gospel-Revelation abounds with Prohibitions of Anger, Malice, Hatred, Revenge, and the like brutal Qualities; and also lays the strongest Restraints upon sensual Pleasures and Delights, and strictly forbids the enjoyment of them beyond the bounds it has set. And this, not only in the outward Acts, but also in the inward Thoughts, Imaginations, and Desires; which corrupt the Soul, and keep it in a disposition to Acts of Cruelty and Uncleanness, and in a readiness to proceed to the exercise of them, whenever Provocations or Enticements come in the way.

And these prohibitions duly attended to in the inward Desires as well as outward Acts, at the same time that they set us above the Condition of Brutes, do also lay a Foundation for the Peace and Happiness of our Lives; which Experience, as well as the universal Consent of the wisest Men in all Ages, proves to be interrupted and destroy'd by nothing so much, as the indulging unruly Lusts and Passions. And whereas, next to these, the Happiness of

See the first Letter, p. 16, 17.

this Life is greatly impair'd by Sickness, Want, Oppression, and many other temporal Calamities; Christianity provides for our Comfort under all these, not upon the Principles of the ancient Philosophers, " Because they are common to Mankind, and we cannot avoid them, and Death will put an end to them; but by affuring us, that they come from the Hand of a wife and good God, who can and will either deliver us from them or support us under them, and that they are defign'd by him to wean us from the Delights of this World, and to prepare us for the Enjoyment of a much better. Of the like Tendency, are the many Precepts of the Gospel, which command us not to fet our Hearts upon the Things of this World, but to pursue them with Moderation and Indifference, and a constant Refignation to the Will of God; as these do not only prevent all the Vexation that otherwise attends the loss of them and our Disappointments about them, but also disengage the Heart from them, and give it greater Liberty, as well as a readier Disposition, to

See before, p. 99.

attend and pursue the Affairs of the next

For tho' it is certain, that the Precepts of Christianity greatly tend to our Comfort and Happiness in this Life, it is as certain, that they are chiefly defign'd to prepare us for the Happiness of another. The Rules of the Philosophers were many of them wifely calculated for the good of human Society and the Members of it in this World; but had by no means such a direct tendency and relation to the Spiritual Enjoyments of the next, as appears to be the general Aim and Tenor of the Rules of the Gospel. And as the Precepts of Christianity are Preparations for a Happiness of a very different Nature from that which any worldly Enjoyments afford, and have higher Views and nobler Ends than can be answer'd or attain'd by those of meer Morality; in these respects, it was necessary that the Gospel Precepts should be built upon higher Principles than those of Morality; and that they should be of a more pure, refin'd, and exalted Nature, and enforced by higher and more noble Motives.

Accordingly,

Accordingly, Christianity first gives us a true Knowledge of the Nature of God: that it is not impure as the greatest part of the Heathens believ'd, nor yet fevere and terrible, according to the general Tenor of the Jewish Dispensation, as given to a stiffneck'd and obstinate People; But that He is a Being of a pure Spiritual Nature, and is kind to us, and loves to do us good, and has given the highest Proof of it in fending his own Son to die for us and redeem us from eternal Death, to the end He might engage our Love and Obedience to Him, and we by that means procure eternal Happiness to ourselves. And by this Knowledge of his Nature, we are led to see, that he must not be worshipped according to the impure Rites of the Heathen Services, nor yet by the Sacrifices of Beafts, which were only Types of our Redemption by Christ; but with a steady Attention of the Soul, and a pure Heart, and fincere Intentions and Resolutions of Obedience; which our Saviour briefly expresses by worshipping God in ' Spirit and in Truth, and which has a natural Tendency to fit us for

the divine Exercises of Praise and Contemplation in the next Life, and, in the mean while, is a means of preserving a constant Communication between God and us, dur-

ing our Continuance in this World.

To the same Spiritual Ends tend all the Duties of Life which are either peculiar to the Christian Institution, or at least are carried by it to greater Degrees of Purity and Perfection. Such are, with regard to ourselves; Holiness of Heart; a sober use of the Enjoyments of Life, with Mortifications and Self-denials as we find occasion: an Indifference about the Things of this World, compar'd with our Care about the Things of the next; the feeking those Things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the Right Hand of God, the having our Conversation in beaven, the laying up our Treasure in beaven, and the keeping a strict Watch over our Thoughts as well as Actions. With regard to our Neighbour, The forgiveness of Injuries, the loving of Enemies, the doing all the good we can to Men for God's Sake, the bleffing them that curse us, the praying for them that despitefully use us and persecute us, and the overcoming evil with good. H 3

good. The Precepts which relate to ourfelves, prepare us for Heaven, as it is a Place of pure spiritual Enjoyments; and those which relate to our Neighbour, prepare us for it, as it is a Place where Love. and Peace, and Unity reign, to the greatest Degree, and in the highest Perfection. And whereas not only the Heathen but also the Jewish Worship consisted chiefly in outward Rites and Ordinances; there are no more than two of that fort in our Saviour's Institution, and those very plain and significant; Baptism, by which we are admitted into the Society of Christians, and all the advantages of it; and the Lord's Supper, by which we declare our Continuance in that Society; thankfully commemorating the great Work of our Redemption by Christ, and applying to ourfelves the Comforts and Benefits of it; and at the fame time, refolving to live as becomes His Disciples, and receiving Spiritual Strength to Support us in that Resolution.

But because, by reason of the Corruption of our Hearts, we are not naturally dispos'd to Spiritual Exercises, and the greatest part of Mankind have their Thoughts

Thoughts employ'd about the Business or the Pleasures of this World, and are daily expos'd to Temptations of one kind or another; all which indispose them for Devotion, and make them ignorant or unmindful of their Duty, and very apt to fall into the Transgression of it; As a fit Remedy for these Evils, the Gospel Institution has appointed a publick Worship, which every Christian is bound to attend, and a peculiar Order of Men to explain to the People their Duty, and remind them of it, and to press and ensorce the several Obligations they are under to perform it.

And fince the Passions and Appetites of Men lead them strongly to sensual Gratisications and Delights, and the Self-denials which the Gospel requires are so disagreeable to weak and corrupt Nature, that it is in vain to hope that Mankind will be kept to their Duty in either of these Respects by meer Reasoning and Exhortation; the Gospel Revelation has provided a balance to our natural Weakness and Corruption, by giving us the strongest Assurances of Rewards and Punishments in another World;

<sup>\*</sup> See the first Letter, p. 72, 73.

the one to deter us from gratifying our unruly Passions and inordinate Appetites, and the other to carry us with chearfulness and resolution thro' all the Self-denials which the Gospel requires.

And as the Love of God is the highest Principle of Duty and Obedience to him, so the Gospel gives us the strongest and most forcible Motive to love him; namely, the sending his own Son into the World to die for us, and by his Death to reconcile us to himself, and make us eternally happy.

And as in all Cases, Example has a very powerful Influence, in order to Practice; We have in our Saviour's Life the most persect Pattern of Goodness, that ever the World beheld; of Meekness and Humility, of Patience and Contentment, of loving to do good to Men, and of an entire Obedience and Submission to the Will of God.

Since also the Christian Institution, which so freely and openly condemns the Wickedness of the World, exposes the sincere Professors of it to Reproach and Persecution; Christ has arm'd and fortissed them against these, not only by general Declarations of his

his acceptance of the Services of those who Confess him before men, and are reproach'd and persecuted for his sake; but also by special Promises, that he will particularly Confess them before God and his Angels, and that great shall be their Reward in heaven; which his Apostles express, by reigning with him, and by receiving from his hands a Crown

of Life.

And because the sense of our natural Corruption and Infirmity might well discourage us from attempting to live up to the pure and spiritual Precepts of the Gospel, and to bring our Hearts to a thorow liking of them, and an habitual Obedience to them; therefore the same Gospel ensures a Supernatural Assistance to all those who shall defire and pray for it, to support them against Temptation, and preserve in them a confrant defire and endeavour to conform their Lives to the Laws of Christ. 5 If ye, fays our Saviour, being evil, know bow to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that afk bim? By which Spirit,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Mat. x. 32. <sup>2</sup> Mat. v. 11, 12. <sup>3</sup> 2 Tim. ii. 12. <sup>4</sup> Jam. i. 12. <sup>5</sup> Luke xi. 13.

our Natures are ' renewed, and our Hearts fanctify'd; and by the same Spirit we are ' strengthen'd with might in the inner man.

And, finally, because Men, thro' a consciousness of their manifold Offences against God, would be in perpetual dread of the Divine Justice, and, in a sense of their great Failings and Infirmities; would think themselves unworthy to approach a Being of infinite Purity, and despair of recovering his Favour when they have offended him by the Transgression of their Duty, therefore, to comfort fincere Christians, and encourage them to persevere in their Duty, the Son of God who took our Nature upon him, hath fatisfy'd the Divine Juffice by dying for us, and is appointed the Intercessor between God and Man, and the Mediator of a New Covenant; by which all who fincerely defire and endeavour to perform their Duty, are not only affur'd of Supernatural Affistance to enable them to difcharge it, but also upon a fincere Repentance, and Faith in him, are Entitl'd to Pardon and Forgiveness if they transgress it, and affur'd that upon those Terms they

Rom. xii. 2. Rom. vi. 13. Ephef. iii. 16.

shall be restor'd to the Favour of God, and the comfortable Hope of Eternal Life, notwithstanding such Transgressions.

This is the account which the New Teffament gives, of the Redemption wrought for us by Christ: ' That his Death was a Satisfaction made to the Divine Justice for the Sins of Mankind; 'That thro' Faith in him, we are affured of the Forgiveness of our Sins upon our Repentance and Amendment; 'That being forgiven, we are justify'd in the fight of God; " That being justify'd in his sight, we are reconcil'd to him; " That he who reconciles us to God, fanctifies our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, to enable us to perform the Will of God, and thereby to continue in his favour; 'That for the same end, he Mediates and Intercedes for us with God, while we continue in this. present Life; and, 'That thro' him we have the promise of Life Eternal." This is a Scene full of Comfort to all those who comply with the Terms of the Gospel; and, that good Christians may be affured that this is the true Account, and that by Confequence the Hope and Comfort they build upon the Redemption wrought for H 6 them them by Christ, and their Trust in him, are well founded; I will give them in one View, and in the Words of Scripture, what is plainly deliver'd there, upon each of the foremention'd Heads.

1. Christ, by his Death, made SATIS-FACTION to the DIVINE JUSTICE for the Sins of Mankind. This the Scripture sets forth by the Expressions, 'Of dying for us,' Of bearing our Sins, 'Of taking away our Sins,' Of being a Propitiation for our Sins,' Of Purchasing and Redeeming or Ransoming us with the Price of his Blood.

—By dying FOR us.] — He laid down bis Life for us— He died for our Sins— He gave bimfelf for us— He was deliver'd for our Offences— He tasted Death for every Man. Agreeably to the Prophecy concerning him, He was wounded for our Transgressions, he was bruised for our Iniquities.

— By BEARING our Sins.] — 7 He was once offer'd to bear the Sins of many — 8 He bare our Sins in his own Body on the Tree — Agreeably to the Prophecies con-

cerning

<sup>1</sup> John iii. 16. 2 1 Cor. xv. 3. 3 Tit. ii. 14. 4 Rom. iv. 25. 5 Heb. ii. 9. 6 Isa. liii. 5. 7 Heb. ix. 28. 8 1 Pet. ii. 24.

cerning him, <sup>2</sup> He bath born our Griefs and carried our Sorrows — <sup>2</sup> The Lord bath laid on him the Iniquity of us all.

- By TAKING AWAY our Sins.]

— 3 He was manifested to take away our Sins.

— 4 He put away Sin by the Sacrifice of himfelf — 5 He hath wash'd us from our Sins in
his own blood — 6 The Blood of Jesus Christ

cleanfeth us from all Sin.

— By being a PROPITIATION for our Sins.] — 'Him God bath set forth to be a Propitiation thro' Faith in his Blood — 'B' God sent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins — 'Phe is the Propitiation for our Sins, and not for our's only, but also for the Sins of the whole World.

— By PURCHASING, and RE-DEEMING or RANSOMING us, with the Price of his Blood.] — 10 He purchas'd the Church of God with his own blood—11 He came to give his life a Ransom for many—
12 He gave himself a Ransom for all—13 We are bought with a price—14 In him we have

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Ifa. liii. 4. <sup>2</sup> Ifa. liii. 6. <sup>3</sup> 1 John iii. 5. <sup>4</sup> Heb ix. 26. <sup>5</sup> Rev. i. 5. <sup>6</sup> 1 John ii. 7. <sup>7</sup> Rom. iii. 25. <sup>8</sup> 1 John iv. 10. <sup>9</sup> 1 John ii. 2. <sup>10</sup> Acts xx. 28. <sup>11</sup> Matt. xx. 28. <sup>12</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 6. <sup>13</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 20. <sup>14</sup> Ephef. i. 7. Redemp.

Redemption thro' his blood— He hath redeemed us to God by his blood— We are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ.

2. The divine Justice being Satisfied, we are affur'd of the FORGIVENESS OF OUR SINS thro' Christ upon a fincere Repentance. His Fore-runner, 3 John the Baptist, preach'd the baptism of Repentance for the. Remission of Sins - Christ tells us, 4 His Blood was shed for many for the Remission of Sins. - After the Refurrection, the Apostles are directed by him, 's to preach Repentance and Remission of Sins in his Name, among all Nations - Accordingly, their Preaching was this: 6 Him God bath exalted with bis right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give Repentance to Mrael, and forgiveness of Sins - 7 Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of Sins - 3 Thro' this Man is preach'd unto you the forgiveness of Sins - 9 To him give all the Prophets witness, that thro' his name who soever believeth in him shall receive remission of Sins - 10 God was in Christ re-

conciling

Rev. v. 9.

2 1 Pet. i. 19.

3 Luke iii. 3.

4 Matt. xxvi. 28.

5 Luk. xxiv. 47.

6 Acts v. 31.

7 Acts ii. 38.

8 Acts xiii. 38.

9 Acts x. 43.

10 2 Cor. v. 19.

conciling the World unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them— In him we have Redemption thro' his blood, the forgiveness of Sins—And we are commanded to forgive one another, even as God, for Christ's

Sake, bath forgiven us.

3. Our Sins being forgiven, we are JUS-TIFIED by Christ in the Sight of God.

By bim all that believe are justified— We are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Swe are justified freely by bis Grace, throut the Redemption that is in Jesus Christ.— Being justified by bis blood, we shall be saved from wrath thro' bim— God bath made bim to be Sin for us, who knew no sin, that we might be made the Righteousness of God, which is by Faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe.

4. Being justified by Christ, we are RE-CONCIL'D to God. 'Being justified by Faith, we have Peace with God, thro' our Lord Jesus Christ.— 10 We are reconcil'd to

Ephef. i. 7. Fphef. iv. 32. Acts xiii. 39. Cor. vi. 11. Rom. iii. 24. Rom. v. 9. Rom. v. 10.

God by the Death of his Son. — 'Us, who were Enemies, hath Christ reconcil'd in the body of his slesh, thro' Death.—'He hath made peace thro' the Blood of his Cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself.—'God hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ;—'Who suffer'd for Sin, that he might bring us unto God. — And, we are accepted in the Beloved.

5. Having reconciled us to God, he SANCTIFIES our Hearts by the Holy Spirit, to enable us to perform our Duty, and thereby to continue in God's favour.

— 6 We are chosen to Salvation, thro' Sanctification of the Spirit.— and 'thro' Sanctification of the Spirit, unto Obedience.— 8 We are fanctified, thro' the offering of the body of Jesus Christ.— 9 God hath not call'd us to uncleanness, but unto holiness,—who hath also given unto us his Holy Spirit.— 10 The Spirit of God dwelleth in us, and 11 our Body is the Temple of the Holy Ghost, and 12 we are an habitation of God thro' the Spirit.— 13 We

Col. i. 21, 22. <sup>2</sup> Col. i. 20. <sup>3</sup> 2 Cor. v. 18. 4 1 Pet. iii. 18. <sup>5</sup> Ephef. i. 6. <sup>6</sup> 2 Thef. ii. 13. 7 1 Pet. i. 2. <sup>8</sup> Heb. x. 10. <sup>9</sup> 1 Thef. iv. 7, 8. 8 Rom. viii. 9. <sup>11</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 19. <sup>12</sup> Ephef. ii. 22. <sup>13</sup> Tit. iii. 5.

are renew'd by the Holy Ghost - and quicken'd ' by the Spirit - and strengthen'd 2 with might by the Spirit in the inner man. - And 3 it is thro' the Spirit that we mortify the deeds of the body - by which deeds, 4 we

grieve and quench the Spirit.

6. He who affifts us by his 5 Spirit upon Earth, to enable us to do the Will of God. and thereby to continue in his favour, is our constant MEDIATOR, INTERCES-SOR, and ADVOCATE with God in Heaven, to present our Prayers for the supply of our Wants, and to obtain a compassionate regard to our Failings and Infirmities. 6 He is the Mediator of the New Covenant. - 7 There is one Mediator between God and Man, even the man Christ Jesus. - 8 He makes Intercession for us at the right band of God. - 9 He appears in the presence of God for us. - 10 No man cometh unto the Father but by him - He is able to fave them to the uttermost who come unto God by him, seeing be ever liveth to make Intercession for

I John vi. 63. <sup>2</sup> Ephef. iii. 16. 3 Rom. viii. 13. 4 Ephef. iv. 30. 1 Thef. v. 19. 5 Luke xi. 6 Heb. xii. 24. 7 1 Tim. ii. 5. 8 Rom. viii. 34. 9 Heb. ix. 24. 10 John xiv. 6. 11 Heb. vii. 25.

them.— 'If any man Sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous.— He is touch'd with the feeling of our Infirmities, and therefore let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace, that we may find grace and mercy to help in time of need— and 'let us draw near with a true heart, and full assurance of Faith.— In him we have boldness, and access with considence.

7. As it is he, who enables us to do the Will of God and to preserve his Favour in this Life, so it is through him that we are made partakers of LIFE ETERNAL:

The Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the World.— to seek and to save that which was lost — that we might live through him — that the World thro' him might be saved,— that believing, we might have life thro' his name,— that who so ever believe the in him, should not perish, but have everlasting Life.— Through him we are saved from wrath.— He hath delivered us from the Wrath to come.— Eternal Life is the Gift

Ephef. iii. 12. 3 John iv. 14. 4 Luke xix. 10. 5 1 John iv. 9. 6 John xx. 31. 7 John iii. 16. 8 John iii. 17. 9 1 Thef. i. 10. Rom. v. 9. 10 Rom. vi. 23.

of God, thro' Jesus Christ our Lord.— God hath given us Eternal Life, and this Life is in his Son,— who is the Captain of our Salvation— the Author of eternal Salvation to all them that obey him:— Neither is there Salvation in any other; for there is none other name under Heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

What has been said under this Sixth general Head, is a short View of the Christian Institution, both in the Ends it proposes, and the Means for attaining those Ends; and it appears in this View, that the Method which the Gospel lays down for our Salvation, is throughout a consistent and uniform Scheme, worthy of God, and contriv'd with the greatest Wisdom and Goodness for the Comfort and Happiness of Man. It appears also, how unable human Reason was, to direct us either to the Ends, or the Means, and that however the due Use and Application of our Reason may answer the Purposes of this Life, it is

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 1 John v. 11. <sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 10. <sup>3</sup> Heb. v. 9. <sup>4</sup> Acts iv. 12.

by no means fufficient to guide us in our way to the next.

But if, after God has made fo full and clear a Revelation in what way and upon what terms he will fave us, Men will refolve to be their own Guides, and refuse to be fav'd in the way that he has appointed; this is at their own peril. If some will believe, that trusting in Christ is their whole Duty, and fo excuse themselves from the Observation of the moral Law, and others will affirm that the Observation of the moral Law is fufficient, and so will forego the Benefit of Christ's Redemption; if some will contend that Christ has done all, and others that he has done nothing: to both these it is sufficient to fay, that they are very vain and prefumptuous in fetting up the Opinion and Imagination of weak and fallible Men, against the infallible Testimony of Persons fent and inspir'd by God. The Gospel-Account is as full and express as words can. make it, on one hand, That Faith in Christ is the Foundation of a Christian's Title to Heaven, and on the other hand, That Repentance and good Works are necessary Conditions of obtaining it.

It may not be improper, before I shut up this Head, to observe that several of our most eminent ' Divines after the Restoration, fet themselves both by Preaching and Writing to enlarge upon the Importance of Moral Duties, and to recommend them with great Earnestness to the Regard of the People; to such a degree, as to stand charged by others with too great a Difregard of the Doctrines and Duties peculiar to Christianity. Whereas, the Cafe in reality was this. During the Times of Confusion, many of the Preachers had not only forborn to inculcate the Duties of Morality, but had labour'd to depreciate them; to persuade the People that Faith was All, and Works Nothing. And therefore the Clergy after the Restoration, in order to take off those unhappy Impressions, found themselves obliged to inculcate with more than ordinary Diligence, the Necessity of moral Duties in the Christian Life, and to labour to restore them to their proper Share in the Christian Scheme. But those of them, who with the honest View I have mention'd, labour'd the most zealously in that way,

Dr. Wilkins, Barrow, Tillotson, Scot.

were at the same time as zealous to explain to the People the great Work of our Redemption by Jesus Christ, as the Means of Salvation which God has appointed: ' The Corruption and Mifery into which Mankind was funk by the Fall of our first Parents; " The necessity of a Mediator, to recover them, and restore them to the favour of God; ' The Incarnation of the Son of God for that end; 4 The Goodness of God in appointing his own Son to be the Mediator between Him and Us; 6 5 The Comfort of having a Mediator of our own Nature; 6 The Expiation made for Sin by the Suffering of Christ; 5 7 The Wisdom of God in making Christ a Sacrifice for Sin; 6 8 The inestimable value of his Sufferings, for the Redemption of all Mankind; " Our Justification by

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Till. vol. III. 303, 320, 321, 598. Bar. vol. I. 464. Vol. II. 222. Vol. III. 228. <sup>2</sup> Till. vol. II. 129. Scot, vol. I. 201. Vol. III. 6. <sup>3</sup> Till. vol. I. 437, 460. Vol. II. 261. Bar. vol. II. 235. <sup>4</sup> Till. vol. I. 445. Scot, vol. III. 24, 42. 5 Till. vol. I. 471. 6 Till. vol. I. 477. Vol. II. 361. Scot, vol. III. 187. 7 Till. vol. I. 473. Vol. II. 637. Bar. vol. I. 464. Vol. II. 339. Scot, vol. III. 167. 8 Bar. vol. II. 313. Vol. III. 454. 9 Till. vol. III. 480. Bar. vol. II. 71.

Faich in him, ' and Sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and 2 his Intercession for us at God's right hand. In general; what can be more express, than the Doctrine laid down by 3 Archbishop Tillotson, concerning our Redemption by Christ, ' That Men are to place all their Hope and Confidence of Salvation in Jesus Christ the Son of God; that is, to believe that thro' the alone Merit of his Death and Sufferings, God is reconcil'd to us; and that, only upon the Account of the Satisfaction which he hath made to divine Justice, we are restor'd to the Favour of God. and our Sins are pardon'd to us, and we have a Title to eternal Life. Not but that there are Conditions on our Part to make us capable of these Benefits, Faith and Repentance and fincere Obedience and Holiness of Life, without which we shall e never be made Partakers of them; but that the Satisfaction of Christ is the only " mexitorious Cause of those Blessings." And together with the several Heads of

<sup>\*</sup> Till. vol. III. 300, 320, 488, 489. Scot, vol. III. 83, 151, 164. 2 Scot, vol. III. 183. 3 Vol. III. 488.

our Redemption by Christ, thus explain'd and enlarg'd upon by those who had most distinguish'd themselves in pressing the Duties of Morality; the People were further instructed by the same Persons, ' That Baptism is an Initiation into a new Covenant with God; and the Lord's Supper, a Renewal of that Covenant; and they were admonish'd by them, 2 of the great Duties of affembling in the publick Worship of God, and 3 frequently receiving the Holy Sacrament, and 4 hearing and reading the Holy Scriptures, as their only fure and complete Rule both of Faith and Practice. Concerning all which, one of those Writers, after having describ'd in a lively manner the Excellencies of Moral Duties, goes on thus: ' The Politive Parts of Religion are our Duty as well as these, and God by his Sovereign Authority exacts them at our Hands; and unless, when Jesus · Christ hath been sufficiently propos'd to us, we do fincerely believe in him - un-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Scot, vol. II. 296. Vol. III. 283. <sup>2</sup> Till. vol. I. 519, 537. Scot, vol. II. 115. <sup>3</sup> Till. vol. I. 248. Scot, vol. II. 294. <sup>4</sup> Till. vol. I. 308. Vol. II. 243. <sup>5</sup> Scot, vol. II. 68.

<sup>·</sup> less,

less we strike Covenant with him by Baptism, and frequently renew that Cove-

and frequently renew that cove-

gently attend on the publick Assemblies of

his Worship-there is no pretence of Mo-

rality will bear us out, when we appear

who wrote an excellent Treatise of Natural Religion (i. e. of Principles and Duties merely moral, and such as are discoverable by the Srength of Reason exerted and improved to the highest degree that our natural Faculties are capable of) concludes with the sullest Declaration of the Insufficiency of them to instruct us in our Duty, or to enable us to perform it, or to conduct us to Happiness, without those clear Lights and Supernatural Assistances which the Gospel-Dispensation conveys to us. His words are these. 42 Notwithstanding all that can be said

of Natural Religion, it cannot be denied,

but that in this dark and degenerate State

into which Mankind is funk, there is

great want of a clearer Light to disco-

ver our Duty to us with greater Certainty,

\* Dr. Wilkins, 1. 2. c. 9.

and to put it beyond all doubt and difo pute what is the good and acceptable · Will of God; and of a more powerful \* Encouragement to the Practice of our Duty, by the Promise of a Supernatural · Affiftance, and by the Affurance of a great and eternal Reward. And all these Defects are fully supplied by that clear and perfect Revelation, which God hath s made to the World by our bleffed Saviour.' And elsewhere he says, ' It is " not the mere Performance of such moral · Duties as are of Natural Obligation, un-6 less they be done in Obedience to Christ as our Lord and Lawgiver, and in reliance " upon him for his Pardon and Acceptance as our Priest and Saviour, that can make us acceptable to Christ, or entitle us to the Name of Christians.' 2 And speaking of the Salvation of those Heathens who liv'd according to the Light of Nature, ( That when God hath not thought fit o to tell us, how He will be pleased to deal with fuch Persons, it is not fit for s us to tell Him how He ought to deal with

<sup>\*</sup> Wilk. Serm. p. 51. \* Nat. Rel. p. 397. them;')

s them;') he adds; s only, of this we

' are sufficiently assured, that in all Ages

and Places of the World, all that are

' faved, are faved by the Mercy of God,

and by the Merits of Jesus Christ, who

is the Lamb flain from the foundation of

' the world; the Scripture having expresly

6 told us, That there is no Salvation in any

other; for there is none other name under

beaven given among men, whereby we must

be faved?

I have already observ'd, that the Duties of Morality were carried by our Saviour to much higher Degrees of Purity and Perfection, than had been practised before either by Jew or Gentile; agreeably to the pure and spiritual Nature of that Happiness which he reveal'd to Mankind; and the necessity of fitting the Soul for the sull Enjoyment of it in the next Life, by habituating ourselves to it, during our Abode in this. And for the same end, we find throughout the New Testament the Practice of Moral Duties enforced, and the breach of them discouraged, not so much from Considerations relating to this World, or

\* So also, Bar. vol. III. p. 449, 464.

an

any temporal Benefit accruing from thence to ourselves or others, as 'From the Sanctions of Duty, which the Civil Relations among Men have receiv'd from God, 'From the manner of God's Dealing with Men, 'From the Example of Christ our Lord and Master, 'From the Regard we owe to our Holy Profession, 'From the Relation we bear to Heaven while we live here upon Earth, 'From the different Spiritual Sources of Moral and Immoral Actions, and, 'From the Instuence which our Regard or Disregard to the Duties of Morality, will have upon our future State.

From the Sanctions of Duty, which the Civil Relations among Men have receiv'd from GOD. Magistrates must be obey'd, not only for wrath, but for conficience-sake, because they are the Ordinance of God; and they must only conduct themselves towards the People, as the Ministers of God to them for good. Husband and Wise must inviolably adhere to each other, because they are join'd together and made one by God, who 4 at the

Rom. xiii. 2, 5. Rom. xiii. 4. Matt. xix. 4. beginning

beginning made them male and female, and by whom ' whoremongers and adulterers will be judg'd. Servants are commanded to be obedient to their Masters 2 in singleness of beart, fearing God; with good will doing service as to the Lord, and not unto men; and Masters to be just and merciful to their Servants, as knowing 3 that they also have a Master in Heaven. And, in general, 4 What soever we do, the Gospel enjoins us to do it beartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; and that's whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do all to the glory of God.

-From the manner of GOD's Dealings with Men. We must be kind to 6 Enemies as well as Friends, because God maketh his Sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. We must ' forgive one another, because God for Christ's sake bath forgiven us. And upon God's having 8 manifested his Love to us in sending his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live thro' bim, is grounded the Inference which St. John

Heb. xiii. 4. <sup>2</sup> Ephef. vi. 5, 6, 7. Col. iii. 22. <sup>3</sup> Ephef. vi. 9. <sup>4</sup> Col. iii. 23. <sup>5</sup> I Cor. x. 31. <sup>6</sup> Matt. v. 44, 45. <sup>7</sup> Ephef. iv. 32. <sup>8</sup> I John iv. 9. <sup>7</sup> Ephef. iv. 32.

makes, <sup>1</sup> Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another; and the loving one another, is the most constant and forcible Motive of good Offices to one another.

-From the Example of CHRIST our Lord and Mafter. 2 Learn of me, fays he, for I am meek and lovely, and ye shall find rest to your Souls: And, says the Apostle, Walk in Love, as Christ also loved us, and gave bimfelf for us .- 4 Let every one of us please his Neighbour for his good to edification: for even Christ pleased not bimself .- \* Let nothing be done thro' strife or vain-glory, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves: Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others; Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.—6 As he that bath call'd you is Holy, so be ye Holy in all manner of Conversation.

From the regard we owe to our HOLY PROFESSION. Immoralities of all kinds are forbidden to Christians, because they ought to walk " worthy of the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 1 John iv. 11. <sup>2</sup> Mat. xi. 29. <sup>3</sup> Ephef. v. 2. <sup>4</sup> Rom. xv. 2, 3. <sup>5</sup> Phil. ii. 3, 4, 5. <sup>6</sup> 1 Pet. i. 15. <sup>2</sup> Ephef. iv. 1, 2, 3. Vocation

Vocation wherewith they are call'd; with all. lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of Peace .- They must walk worthy of God, who bath call'd them to his Kingdom and Glory .- " They must walk as Children of Light .- 3 Their Conversation must be as becomes the Gospel of Christ .- + They must adorn the Doctrine of God our Saviour in all things; and take care that the ' Name of God and bis Doctrine be not blasphem'd, or evil spoken of among the Gentiles thro them.—We are to walk honeftly (or decently) as in the day (the Day-light of the Gospel) not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying; and we must put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof.

-From the relation we bear to HEA-VEN, while we live here upon Earth.— Our Conversation (or Citizenship) is in Heaven; and because we are only 8 stran-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 1 Thef. ii. 12. <sup>2</sup> Ephef. v. 8. <sup>3</sup> Phil. i. 27. <sup>4</sup> Tit. ii. 10. <sup>5</sup> 1 Tim. vi. 1. Tit. ii. 5. <sup>6</sup> Rom. xiii. 13, 14. <sup>7</sup> Phil. iii. 20. <sup>8</sup> 1 Pet. ii. 11. 14. gers

gers and pilgrims upon earth, we must abstain from slessly lusts (the inordinate Enjoyments of this World) which war against the Soul; and we are also put in mind that we are only sojourners here, and have no continuing City, but seek one to come, that we may not set up our rest in this World, nor be too sollicitous about the Things of it, but may have our heavenly Country always in our Eye, and make it our greatest Concern to arrive safely there.

of Moral and Immoral Actions. <sup>2</sup> Love, Peace, Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness, Temperance, are recommended to our Practice as fruits of the Spirit, and as the <sup>3</sup> Wisdom that is from above, which is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits. But <sup>4</sup> Adultery, Fornication, Uncleanness, Lasciviousness, Hatred, Variance, Emulation, Wrath, Strife, Envying, Murders, Drunkenness, Revellings, and such like, are represented by the Gospel, as works of the slesh, and the Fruits of that Wisdom <sup>8</sup> which descended not from

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Heb. xi. 16. <sup>2</sup> Gal. v. 22, 23. <sup>3</sup> Jam. iii. 17. <sup>4</sup> Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. <sup>5</sup> Jam. iii. 15. above.

proceeding from the Corruptions of Nature without the guidance of God's Holy Spirit, and from the Suggestions of the Devil, of whom the Gospel every where warns us as an implacable Enemy to Mankind, who walketh about seeking whom he may devour, and whose wiles and snares we must not hope to escape but by watchfulness and prayer.

From the Influence which our regard or difregard to the Duties of Morality will have upon our FUTURE STATE. St. Paul concludes a large Catalogue of Sins, Fornication, Uncleanness, Wrath, Envy, &c. with this just but terrible Sentence, 2 Of which, I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God. On the contrary, the Gospel recommends the practice of Humility, by ensuring to it 2 the Kingdom of Heaven; Meekness, because it is 4 in the sight of God of great Price; Mercifulness, as the Means of 3 ob-

<sup>\*</sup> I Pet. v. 8. Ephef. vi. 11, 18. 2 Tinh. ii. 26. \* Gal. v. 21. 3 Matt. v. 3. 4 1 Pet. iii. 4. 5 Matt. v. 7.

to the running our 'Christian Course with Success; Purity of Heart, as a necessary Preparation to the 'seeing God; Charity, as it is the 's laying up in store for ourselves a good Foundation against the time to come, that we may attain Eternal Life; Patience, and Perseverance in well doing, because our 's light affliction which is but for a moment worketh for us a far more exceeding weight of Glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are seen, but at the things which are seen are Temporal, but the things which are not seen are Eternal.

This is the true Gospel-Morality; which makes all the Relations among Men, and the Duties belonging to them, to center in God, and connects the Offices of this Life with the Happiness of the next; and it is no other in effect, than that which St. Paul more briefly lays down in the following words: \* The Grace of God that bringeth Salvation bath appear'd to all Men, Teach-

<sup>1</sup> Cor. ix. 25. 2 Matt. v. 8. 3 1 Tim. vi. 18, 19. 4 2 Cor. iv. 17. 18. 5 Tit. ii. 11, 12. 13, 14.

ing us, that denying Ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we should live Soberly, Righteously and Godly in this present World; Looking for that blessed Hope and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all Iniquity, and purisy unto himself a peculiar People, zealous

of good Works.

I am aware, that in the View of Christianity I have given under this Sixth general Head, many things are laid down, which fome late Writers, who yet disown the Name of Infidels, have with much Confidence pronounc'd to be Superstition. And that the same Charge might not be repeated, I judg'd it necessary to shew thus particularly from the plain and express Words of Scripture, that this is no other Superstition than what was taught by Christ and his Apostles. It is indeed to be greatly lamented, that in a Christian Country there should be any need to prove, that the Work of our Redemption by the Death of Christ, with the Benefits thereby obtain'd for us, is a fundamental Doctrine of the Christian Faith. But when we fee fo much pains takem taken to represent these things as Corruptions in Religion, we who have the care of Souls, can think no Pains too much to explain and inculcate those great and necessary Truths, by shewing from the whole Tenor of the New Testament, that they are the Means which God himself hath appointed for the Salvation of Mankind.

The Excellence of the Christian Institution, join'd to the Evidences of its divine Authority as set forth in my former Letter,

naturally leads,

VII. To the great Sinfulness and Danger of rejecting it, or, in other Words, to the great Guilt and Perverseness of INFIDELITY. For though it is not in any Man's Power to believe what he pleases, because as things appear at this or that time to his Understanding, so his Belief must be, and we can neither be charg'd with Guilt, nor be liable to Punishment, for what we cannot help; yet in searching after Truth, there are two things which are in our power, 'The Use of our Faculties, and 'The due and impartial use of them; and if we fail of sinding out the Truth, or fall into Error, by not using our Faculties at

all, or by using them unduly, we are certainly accountable to God who gave them, and who as our Sovereign Lord has a right to require a due use and to punish the Abuse of them. In speculative Matters, which no way concern our Duty or Happiness, Men may be as ignorant as they please without Danger of Guilt; but to be an Infidel in Religion thro' Sloth and Careleffness, for want of examining at all, or thro' a flight and superficial Examination, makes Men highly guilty in the fight of God; both as it is a neglect of uling and applying the Faculties he has given us, and as it is manifestly contrary to all the Rules of right Reason, not to use them in a matter which fo nearly concerns our Safety and Interest; especially, when the Evidences of Christianity lie so open to the general Apprehension of Mankind, and may fo eafily be enter'd into and underflood.

No less guilty are they in the fight of God, who in examining the Grounds of Religion, suffer their Minds to be influenced by vicious Inclinations, or by Pride and an

<sup>1</sup> Letter 1ft, p. 32, &c.

Affectation of Singularity, or by any immoral and indirect Motive whatfoever. It is every Day's Experience and Observation, how greatly the Judgments of Men are influenc'd in temporal Matters by their own private Convenience, and Interest, and other Confiderations, which do not at all belong to the Matter they are to judge of; and this may be much more suspected in the Judgment they make of the Truth of Christianity, confidering how contrary its Precepts are to the inordinate Desires and Inclinations of Nature. We cannot enter into the Hearts of Men, to fee upon what Motives they act, and under what Influences they reason; but when we consider the Strength and Clearness of the Evidences of Christianity, with the Advantages and Excellencies of the Gospel-Institution, and the strict Restraints it lays upon Excess and Uncleanness of all Kinds, we cannot but see that it requires the greatest Degree of Charity, to ascribe their Infidelity to any thing, but the Love of Vice, or the Love of Contradiction. This is what the ' Apostle calls an evil Heart of Unbelief; and where that \* Heb. iii. 12.

is the Cafe, Infidelity is a Sin of the highest Nature; 'As it corrupts the Reason and Understanding which God has given, and fubjects it to base and unworthy Influences; As it degrades human Nature, and carries in it an Indifference whether we be immortal or die like Beasts, or rather a Desire that we may die like them; 'As it is an Affront to God, in rejecting his Messengers, who come with clear and evident Teffimonies of their being fent by him; 'As it makes him a Liar, and is a manifest Contempt of his Goodness in sending a Revelation, and defeats his gracious Defigns and Measures for the Salvation of Mankind. Well, therefore, might our Saviour denounce Damnation against all those who did not receive Him and his Doctrine: "He that believeth and is battized, shall be faved, but be that believeth not, (i.e. disbelieveth). shall be damned. 2 If ye believe not that I am He, ye shall die in your Sins. 3 He that believeth not, is condemned already, because he bath not believ'd in the Name of the only begotten Son of God; And this is the Con-

demnation,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Mark xvil 16. <sup>2</sup> John viii. 24. <sup>3</sup> John iii.

demnation, that Light is come into the World. and Men lov'd Darkness rather than Light, because their Deeds were evil. If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had Sin, but now they have no Cloak for their Sin. And agreeable to these are the Declarations of his Apostles. St. John reckons the Unbelievers among those \* who shall have their Portion in the Lake that burneth with Fire and Brimstone. St. Paul tells us, 3 that God will take Vengeance on them that know him not, and that obey not the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ; and the Author to the Hebrews, 4 How shall we escape, if we neglett so great Salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto us by them that heard him: God also bearing them Witness both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost? And He that despis'd Moses's Law, died without Mercy - Of bow much sorer Punishment, suppose ye, shall be be thought worthy, who hath trodden under Foot the Son of God, and bath counted the Blood

<sup>&</sup>quot; John xv. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Rev. xxi. 8. 3 2 Thef. i. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Heb. x. 28, 29.

of the Covenant, wherewith he was fantified, an unboly Thing, and hath done despight to the Spirit of Grace? Agreeably to what John the Baptist had declared to the Jews, \* He that believeth not the Son shall not see Life, but the Wrath of God abideth on him.

I mention these Things, to shew the Infidels of our Age, that to believe or notbelieve is far from being a matter of Indifference, as they would make it; and to convince those who are in danger of being feduced by them, how nearly they are concerned, before they give up themselves to fuch Guides, to give the Evidences of Christianity a thorow and impartial Examination. For which End, I recommend to them the three following Tests of Sincerity, 1. That they find their Hearts fincerely disposed to embrace any Doctrine, and follow any Rule of Life, that shall appear to come from God. 2. That they inwardly wish to find a Religion well-founded, which provides a Remedy for the Corruptions of our Nature, and ensures to good Men a State of Happiness and Immortality after this

Life. 3. That they find in themselves no Lust, or other Vice or Passion, which inclines them to wish that such a Religion may not be well founded. Let but Men, before they enter upon their Examination, put the Heart under these Guards, and I am firmly persuaded there is not the least Danger that Insidelity will ever take hold of it.

But how great foever the Guilt of Infidelity may be, a Zeal to Promote it is still greater; as carrying in it not only all the Aggravations that attend the Disbelief of a Revelation from God, but also great Injustice and Uncharitableness towards Men. He who endeavours to bring others to a Behef of Christianity, approves himself to be a Lover of Mankind, in shewing them the Way to an Eternity of Happiness, and abridging them only of fuch Enjoyments as would be evidently injurious to their Bodies and Estates, and by making their Minds easy and quiet, in a comfortable Affurance that in all Events they are fafe. But the Infidel, while he indulges Men in Enjoyments which the Gospel forbids, cannot assure them that there are not Rewards and Punishments in another another World, which will be bestow'd and inflicted by the Rules that the Gospel lays down. As in all Cafes, to endeavour to persuade Men out of the Belief of Things which for ought we know may be true, is unfair; so to do this in Matters which nearly concern their Welfare and Interest, is unjust. Nor is it only unjust, but also very uncharitable, to endeavour to deprive Men of a Belief, upon which the Comfort and Happiness of their Lives depends; unless such Belief were attended with some great Calamity or Mifery in other Respects. And further, it is both unjust and uncharitable to Society and Government, to endeavour to root out of the Minds of Men those powerful Restraints from Wickedness and Violence, that Christianity has laid them under; the Influences of which are a great Security to Peace and Order, and have their Effects in innumerable Cafes that human Laws cannot reach. Add to this, that the highest Security that Men can give to one another, is an Oath; which in Christian Countries is taken upon the Holy Gospels. And as the Obligation of the Oath so taken is understood to arise from a Belief

a Belief of the Truth of those Gospels, and of the Threatnings and Judgments denounc'd by them, one cannot well conceive how it should take hold of the Conscience of an Insidel. So that the Promoters of Insidelity, who so evidently weaken if not destroy the Bonds of Society and Government, may well be look'd up-

on as publick Enemies to Mankind.

'Tis true indeed, in exchange for the Comforts and Advantages they take away from private Persons and publick Societies, they promise a quiet and uninterrupted Enjoyment of Pleasures which the Christian Religion forbids; but in this too they are unjust, in that they promise what they know they are not able to perform. The utmost Progress they can ordinarily hope for in promoting Infidelity, is to persuade Men that the Gospel Revelation, which contains such terrible Threatnings against Lust and Uncleanness of all Kinds, is not certainly true; but while they pretend not, to prove that it is certainly not true, they cannot free a Course of Voluptuousness from great Mixtures of Doubts and Fears; and these are perpetually reviv'd and

and heighten'd, by feeing fuch Numbers of wife and good Men embrace the Christian Faith, and act upon it; giving in their Lives a daily Testimony of their firm Belief of the Truth of it. For the' this is not a direct Proof that the Gospel is true, it is a great Presumption that there is a Strength in the Evidences of the Truth of it, which their Lusts and Passions will not let them see; and, at the same time, it is a daily Warning to them, that the Contempt of it is too great a Hazard for a wife Man to run; a Warning, that the most hardened Infidel, in his thoughtful Hours, and in the Time of Sickness, Danger, or Distress, is not able to resist.

THE Evidences of the Christian Religion are compris'd under two general Heads, External and Internal. The External Evidences are those which prove it to be of divine Authority, as, 'The sulfilling of ancient Prophecies in Christ, 'The general Expectation of the Messiah at that Time, 'The Miracles wrought by Christ and his Apostles, 'His foretelling many Things Things which punctually came to pass, and, 'The wonderful Propagation of the Gospel after his Death. The Internal Evidences are, 'The need there was of a Revelation from God to instruct and reform Mankind, ' The Fitness of the Gofpel Revelation for that end, 'The Excellence of the Doctrines contain'd in it, and, 'The visible Tendency of the whole to the Improvement and Perfection of human Nature and the Happiness of Mankind, in this World and the next.

In this and my former Letter, I have laid before you the Evidences of both Sorts, to guard you against all the Attacks of Infidels, and to keep you ftedfast in the Christian Faith; and I beseech you serioully to perufe what I have written for your Use, and to weigh the several Parts of it with Attention and Impartiality, as Matters of the utmost Consequence to you, and more especially necessary to be attended to in these Days, when the Cause of Infidelity is so openly espous'd, and the Advocates for it are fo industrious to gain Profelytes. And that God will be pleas'd to give

give a Bleffing to these Endeavours for your spiritual Good, and dispose your Hearts to attend to the Means of your Salvation, and affift you in your Enquiries after the true Way to it, is, and shall be, the hearty Prayer of

Your faithful Friend, and Pastor,

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TENNIET I OF 6 T.

Edm'. London'.



#### The BISHOP of London's

Third Pastoral Letter, &c.

Occasion'd by the Suggestions of Insidels against the Writings of the New Testament, consider'd as a Divine Rule of Faith and Manners.

before you the Evidences of the Christian Religion, as drawn from the Accounts which the Evangelists give us of our Saviour Christ, viz. 'The general Expetiation of the Messiah at that Time, arising from the Prophecies concerning him; 'The many and great Miracles which he wrought, in confirmation of his Doctrine and Mission; 'His Predictions of several very remarkable Events, which were afterwards punctually sulfill'd; and,

P 1

First Past. Lett. p. 34

The wonderful Propagation of the Gospel after his Death, against all the Powers of the World, and the Lufts, Paffions, and Prejudices of Mankind. To these I have added the Evidences of the great Need there was of fuch a Revelation from God: confidering the gross Ignorance and Corruption of Manners into which the World was funk, and the Inability of the Philofophers to enlighten and reform it. And this led me to lay before you the 2 Excellency of the Christian Institution for the effecting what the Philosophers could not effect; 'The great Advantage of a Divine Authority, to ascertain the Duties and Doctrines it lays down; 'The Purity of its Precepts, fo much higher and more perfect, than those which mere Morality prescrib'd; 'The natural Tendency of them to fit and prepare the Soul for the spiritual Exercises of the next Life; 'The firit Restraints which the Gofpel lays upon irregular Enjoyments of all kinds, not only in the outward Acts, but the inward Imaginations and Defires; 'The full Assurance it gives of future

Second Past. Lett. p. 103, &c. 2 Second Past. Lett. p. 162. Rewards

Rewards and Punishments to excite us to Obedience, and the supernatural Assistance it promises, to enable us to obey; 'The Peace and Satisfaction it affords the Mind, by discovering a plain and certain Method of obtaining the Pardon of Sin, and thereby fecuring the Love and Favour of God; · The folid Foundation it lays for Ease and Comfort under all the Calamities of Life. and more especially for Patience, Resignation and Constancy under Sufferings and Persecution for Righteousness-sake; The Means it provides for preferving an habicual Sense of God and Religion upon the Minds of Men, by the Appointment of a Ministry, and Ordinances, and publick Assemblies, for that End; and, upon the whole, ' The Perfection and Happiness to which it advances human Nature, both in this Life, and the next, far beyond any thing that the meer natural Powers of Body and Mind could have discover'd and attain'd to.

And as a Consequence of the clear and undoubted Evidences of our Saviour's Mission and Authority, and of the Excellency of the Gospel-Institution; I have further

further i shewn the indispensible Obligation we are under to attend to it and embrace it; together with the Folly, Perverseness and Sinfulness of not embracing it, and much more of despising and rejecting it.

Since therefore both the Evidences and the Excellency of the Christian Institution. and of the whole Work of our Redemption by Jesus Christ, are so fully and clearly laid down in the 2 Writings of the New Testament, from whence I drew my Accounts of them; Infidelity can have no possible Refuge, but in a downright Disbelief of the Truth and Authority of those Writings; either as forged from the Beginning, or convey'd to us with great Corruptions; or as containing Facts related by Persons who had no Credit, and Doctrines deliver'd by those who had no Authority. This is the Refuge to which it was eafily forefeen the Infidels of our Age must have their final Recourse, to justify their rejecting the Doctrine of our Redemption by Christ, and their avow'd Difregard of the Writings of the New Testament further than as they contain fuch moral Precepts, as Natural \* Second Past. Lett. p. 196. \* Ibid. p. 161, 162.

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Reason might suggest, and such as may in their Opinion be learnt as well, if not better, from Heathen Writers. As it is impossible to maintain that Scheme, on Supposition that those Writings are true and genuine, and that the Doctrines contain'd in them subfift upon a divine Authority; the Patrons of it must of necessity be driven to deny one or other of those Affertions, if not both. The Consequence on each side is clear and undoubted: If the Writings of the New Testament be not authentick (i. c. either the Writings not genuine, or the Authority not divine, ) the Infidel-Scheme is well founded; but, on the other hand, if they be authentick in both those respects, Christianity stands unshaken and immovable, and all Pretences either that it is not well founded, or that it is no more than meer Morality, must fall to the Ground.

This is a Point which I' touch'd upon in my first Pastoral Letter. But since that Time, the Patrons of Infidelity have told us openly and without referve, how little they consider the Scriptures as a Rule to Men, either of Belief or Practice. They

plead for the reading them with fuch 'Freedom, as to affent or diffent, just as they judge it agrees or disagrees with the Light of Nature and the Reason of Things; and commend those as the only wise Men, who believe not the Dostrines, because contain'd in Scripture, 3 but the Scripture on account of the Dostrines; who admit not any of its Doctrines without an Examination by that Rule; who 4 admit fuch Things for divine Scripture, as [they being Judges] tend to the Honour of God and the Good of Men, and nothing else; and, who do not admit any thing to be writ by divine Inspiration, tho' it occurs ever so often in Scripture, till they are certain it will bear the Test they lay down. 5 They infift further, how eafily Mankind may be imposed on in the point of Revelation; and how little Certainty there is or can be, that any Revelation bas been convey'd entire to distant Times and Places ; and they rest much upon the great Number 6 of various readings in the Copies of the New Testament, as rendring it uncertain to

<sup>\*</sup> Christianity as old as the Creation, p. 201.

<sup>\* -</sup> P. 371. 3 - P. 192. 4 - P. 328.

<sup>5 —</sup> P. 185. 6 — P. 284. 324.

us what the true Text was; and alledge, That 'no Court of Judicature admits of a Copy, the taken from the Original, without Oath made by a difinterested Person, of his having compared it with the Original; from whence they conclude, how unreasonable it is absolutely to depend, in Things of the greatest Moment, on voluminous Writings, which have been so often transcribed by Men who never

saw the Original.

These, and others of the like Tendency, are the Principles which the Insidels of our Age are openly and avowedly advancing; that by destroying the Credit of the Holy Scriptures, they may make way for their own Scheme of Natural Religion. And there are also others amongst us, who tho' they do not dispute our receiving the four Gospels as a Rule of Faith and Practice, will not agree that the other Books of the New Testament have a right to be consider'd as part of that Rule; but on the contrary, have taken great pains to represent some of those Books as of doubtful Credit.

Since therefore those facred Writings, as having all of them the Stamp of divine

. 4 Page 324.

Authority, are the great Charter of Chriflians, upon the Validity of which their Faith and their Hope are built; to the end that those whom the Providence of God hath placed under my Care, may be arm'd in all Points against the Attempts of Infidelity and every Approach to it, I have judg'd it expedient to enter into that Matter more fully and distinctly, in order to give you a clear View of the Evidences both of the Truth and the Authority of those Writings. And this I consider, as in fome fort a Duty incumbent upon me. For having shewn you in my Second Letter the Insufficiency of Reason in this corrupt State to be your Guide in Matters of Religion, it may well be expected, that I also shew you what is a sufficient Guide, and where the Directions are to be found, which will acquaint you with the certain Way to Salvation, and upon which you may securely depend, as being the Guide which God himself has given you. And this will be effectually done, by making good the following Politions:

I. The four Gospels contain a faithful and true Account of the Birth, Life,

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Death,

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Death, Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus Christ.

II. The whole Scheme of Christianity or the Gospel Dispensation, was not fully open'd to the World by Christ himself immediately, in the course of his Ministry; but many Things were left to be deliver'd or explain'd by his Apostles, whom he particularly Instructed and Commission'd for that End.

III. The Apostles in vertue of their Commission from Christ, being not only to testify and deliver to the World the Things which they had seen and had been taught by him, but further to open and explain the Gospel Dispensation; were under the Guidance and Assistance of the Holy Ghost, which they received, according to his Promise, before they enter'd upon their Ministry.

IV. What the Things are, relating to the Gospel Dispensation, which the Apostles were to open and explain, pursuant to the Commission and Instruction received from Christ and under the Guidance and Assistance of the Holy Ghost; must, in conjunction with the Gospels, be learnt

from

from their Preaching and Writings, as deliver'd to us in their Acts and Epiftles.

V. The Books of the New Testament, in which the Doctrines deliver'd by Christ and his Apostles are contain'd, have been faithfully transmitted to the Christians of succeeding Ages.

VI. The Doctrines of the Apostles, contained in their Epistles and in the Asts, together with what is taught by our Saviour in the Gospels, were design'd to be a standing Rule of Faith and Manners to Christians in all Ages, and were from the Beginning consider'd and receiv'd as such, by the Churches of Christ.

r. The four Gospels contain a faithful and true Account of the Birth, Life, Death, Refurrection, and Ascension of Jesus Christ. When we would be satisfied concerning the Truth of any History, the two Things we chiefly enquire after, are, The Knowledge the Writer had of his Subject, and the Character he bore in Point of Integrity; the sirft, to convince us that he could not be imposed upon himself, and the second, that he had no Inclination or Design to im-

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pose upon others. Now, that there was fuch a Person as Jesus of Nazareth, who lived at the Time the Gospels speak of, and who made choice of feveral Perfons to be Disciples, are Facts, which the greatest Enemies of Christianity have never denied; and if they had denied them, they would have been effectually confuted by Writers of undoubted Credit, who lived at the Time, and in the Age which immediately followed. Of these Disciples in general, it is affirm'd, and has never been denied or questioned, That they left their several Callings and Occupations, to the end they might be wholly at Liberty to attend Jefus, and receive his Instructions: He ordain'd twelve, that they should be with him; who, with others, accompanied him 2 all the Time that he went in and out among them ; beginning from the Baptism of John, unto the same Day that he was taken up from them: And having been 3 with him from the Beginning, they were well qualified to bear Witness of the Things that were done and spoken by him. And what we find particularly declared by one, might be truly faid by

<sup>\*</sup> Mark iii. 14. 2 Acts i. 21. 3 John xv. 27.

all of them, where - ever they preached, " That which we have heard, which we have feen with our Eyes, which we have tooked upon, and our Hands bave bandled, declare we unto you. The Things they recorded as faid and done by Christ, they heard from his own Mouth, and faw with their own Eyes, and did not deliver them upon the Report of others. Nor did they only see him, fo as to have a transient View of him; but they look'd upon him, and had longcontinued Views of him, and converted familiarly with him. And, that their Eyes might not be deceived, either with Regard to his Person or Miracles, they not only touched, but bandled; their own Hands distributed the Loaves; and after his Refurrection, they were all directed, not only to behold his Hands and his Feet, to fatisfy them that it was he himself, but also to bandle him, that they might be thoroughly convinc'd that he had Flesh and Bones. and so could not be a Spirit, as they ar first suspected. And one of them, who was more distrustful than the rest, was

i 1 John i. 1. Luke xxiv. 39

commanded even to 'thrust his Hand into the Wound in his Side.

The fame Persons who were thus prepared, by all ordinary and natural Qualifications, to give an Account of the Life and Actions of Christ, received also a supernatural Affistance for the Work, by his fending the Holy Ghoft, for this among other Ends, that he might bring all Things to their Remembrance, what soever be bad said unto them. And two of these, so enabled by all Helps natural and supernatural, wrote two of the Gospels, namely Matthew and John. As to Mark and Luke, the other two Evangelists; it is affirmed by some of the Antients, that they were two of the Seventy Disciples, whom our Lord e sent before his Face to every City and Place whither be himself would come; to whom he gave Power to heal the Sick, and to cast out Devils; and faid to them, as he had done to the twelve Aposles, He that beareth you, beareth me, and be that despiseth you, defpiseth me. But however that be; after our Saviour's Ascension we find them expresty mentioned as Fellow-Labourers with St.

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 27. <sup>2</sup> Luke x. 1, 9, 16, 17.

raul.

Paul, to whom the whole Gospel had been immediately revealed from Heaven, and one of them with St. Peter, whom Christ chose to be with him in the whole Course of his Ministry. St. Paul speaks of Mark, as his ' Fellow-Labourer in the Gospel, whom we accordingly find with him when he wrote his Epistle to the Colossians and that to Philemon; and when he commands Timothy to come to him, he directs him 2 to take Mark and bring bim with him, as one profitable to bim in the Ministry. St. Peter. mentions him in his first Epistle, as then with him, and also calls him 3 bis Son: a Name which we find applied in the New Testament to those whom the Apostles had instructed in the Faith and converted. and to those who laboured with them in instructing and converting others; for in this Sense, St. Paul says of & Timothy, As a Son with the Father, be bath ferved with me in the Gospel; and of Titus, Mine own Son after the common Faith. Luke also is called by St. Paul his & Fellow-Labourer; whom.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Col. iv. 10, 11. Phil. 24. <sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 11.
<sup>3</sup> 1 Pet. v. 13. <sup>4</sup> Phil. ii. 22. <sup>5</sup> Tit. i. 4.
<sup>6</sup> Col. iv. 14. <sup>2</sup> Tim. iv. 11. Philem. 24.

we find accompanying him in his Travels, and particularly to have been with him when he wrote his Epistles to the Colossians, to Timothy, and to Philemon.

- Accordingly, the Accounts which the Antients give of those two Gospels and the Writers of them, are as follow. Irenaus fays, " That Mark, the Disciple and Interpreter of Peter, committed those Things to Writing which had been related to him by Peter; and that Luke, the Companion of Paul, recorded in a Book the Gospel which Paul preached.' And elfewhere, he fays of St. Luke, " That he was an infeparable Companion of St. Paul, and his-Fellow-Labourer in the Gospel.' Tertullian fays, 43 That the Gospel which Mark published, is affirmed to be Peter's, whose Interpreter he was fas writing in Greek what he heard St. Peter deliver to the Jews in their own Language] and that which was drawn up by Luke, is ascribed to Paul." 4 Eusebius relates, upon the Authority of more ancient Writers, ' That the Christians at Rome prevailed with Mark to fet

down

Firen. 1. 3. c. 1. Firen. 1. 3. c. 14. Firenth, contra Marcion. 1. 4. c. 5. Fifeb. 1. 2. c. 15.

down in writing the Doctrine which Peter had preach'd; and that afterwards Peter confirmed it, and authorised it to be publickly read in their Assemblies.' And elsewhere, from Origen, . The fecond Gospel is that of Mark, who fet it down as it was delivered to him by Peter; and the third, that of Luke, which is commended by St. Paul! To these we must add what the same 2 Eusebius says, as handed down by Tradition to his Time, ' That St. John approved the three other Gospels, and gave his Testimony to the Truth of them." And, ' 3 That Copies of these Holy Gofpels were with great Zeal convey'd to remote Countries, by 4 those who succeeded the Apostles in the Propagation of the Christian Faith: ' and they were read in publick Affemblies and received as the Foundation of that Faith, without the least Mark of Distinction in Point of Authority.

Thus stands the Evidence of the Truth of the Gospel-History, with regard to the exact Knowledge the Writers had of their Subject; which shews that they were not

imposed

Euseb. 1. 6. c. 25. 2 Ibid. 1. 3. c. 24. 3 Ibid. c. 37. 4 Just. Mart. Apol. 2. Iren. 1. 3. c. 11, 12.

imposed upon themselves. And if it shall also appear that they were Persons of Integrity, and had no Inclination or Defign to impose upon others, the Evidence is as complete, as can well be given of any ancient Facts what soever. With this View, let us confider, 'The Character and Condition of the Persons, and 'The Time and Manner of their Writing; with other Circumstances, from whence we may judge whether or no they are attended with any Marks or Suspicions of Fraud or Defign.

So far were the Persons from being artful or defigning Men, that they were reproach'd by the Enemies of Christianity, as rude and mean, simple and illiterate; and so far were they from having any worldly Views of Profit, or Pleasure, or Honour, after they fet out on the Work of propagating the Gospel; that Persecution, Affliction, and Reproach, were almost the constant Attendants of the Propagators of it. As to the Time, they wrote and published their Gospels while the Matters were fresh in Memory, and while many Persons were living who wanted not Inclination to detect them, if they could have been convicted

victed of Falshood. And as to their Manner of Writing, it is plain, open, and undifguifed; free from all Appearance of Art or Contrivance, and carries in it this Sig. nal Testimony of Truth and Impartiality, that they freely confessand record the Failings and Weakneffes of themselves and their Brethren, viz. The frequent Rebukes they received from their Master for their Ignorance and Slowness of Understanding; Their Views of temporal Power and Grandeur, during their Attendance upon him; and at last, Their shameful Denial and Defertion of him. If we confidenthe Facts contained in the Gospel-History, and the Tendency of them, they are such as overthrow the Religion both of Jews and Gentiles, and therefore could not escape the severest Scrutiny; and if we consider the Numbers who afterwards undertook to attest and publish. those Facts, it is incredible that if they were not true, no one of them should be prevailed with, either by Hope or Fear, to discover the Imposture; and next to imposfible to suppose, that all of them should submit to the severest Trials, and many of them to Death itself, rather than deny them. Thefe

These are the Evidences, that the Evangelifts could not be deceived themselves, and that they had no Intention or Defire to deceive others. And we accordingly find all the four Gospels under the Names of the several Evangelists distinctly spoken of by the most early Writers of the Church, as the known and undoubted Records of our Saviour's Life and Actions, and as fuch, received by all Christian Churches, and read in their publick Affemblies. 'Clement, the Disciple of St. Paul, cites many Pasfages out of them; and, in one Place, after having quoted the Prophecy of Isaiah, he adds, and another Scripture faith, and then quotes the Gofpel of St. Matthew: In another Place, he cites the Gospel of St. Luke, with these Words immediately prefixed, The Lord faith in the Gospel. 2 Polycarp, a Disciple of St. John, mentions these four Gospels distinctly and by Name, with particular Circumstances relating to each; if fome Fragments ascrib'd to him be genuine. 3 Justin Martyr, speaking of the Institution

<sup>2</sup> Grabe, Not. in Iren. p. 205. Bull. Defent. Fid. Nic. p. 52, 53. 3 Justin. Apol. 2.

Clem. Ep. ad Cor. Ep. 2. S. 2. 8. of the Authority of which Epiftle, fee Cotelerius, p. 132, 140, 181.

of the Lord's Supper, fays, 'The Apoftles in their Records, which are called Gofpels, declared that it was commanded by Christ to be so performed; and a little after adds, 'That those Records were publickly read in the Christian Assemblies on the Lord's Day; and in his other Works, he uses the same Stile of the Records of the Apostles, and cites feveral Paffages out of them, as the standing Records of the Church. 2 Tatian, the Disciple of Justin, reduced the four Gospels into one, which in After-ages was usually called the Harmony of the four Gospels. S Irenaus gives this Account of all the four, which hath already been taken Notice of in part 4, 'Matthew, fays he, deliver'd his Gospel to the Hebrews, while Peter and Paul preach'd at Rome; after whose Departure, Mark the Disciple and Interpreter of Peter, conveyed to us in Writing the Things which Peter had ' preached; and Luke, the Companion of Paul, recorded in a Book the Gospel which Paul preach'd. Afterwards, John

Justin. Dial. Tryph. p. 327, 328, 329, 331, 332, 333, 334. 2 Euseb. I. 4. c. 29. Monotessaron. 3 Iren. l. 3. c. 1. 4 Pag. 222. 6 the

the Disciple of our Lord, who also lean'd on his Breast at Supper, published his "Gospel while he stay'd at Epbesus in Asia." The same I Irenaus, speaking of the Authority of the Gospels, says, ' That the. very Hereticks gave their Testimony to them, while each laboured to support his Opinion from them; and as to the Number, 'That they were neither more nor less than four, and that they who made them either more or fewer, were vain, ignorant and prefumptuous.' 2 Clement, speaking of a Passage cited out of the Egyptian Gospel, says, It is not to be found in the four Gospels which have been deliver'd down to us.' And Origen, mentioning the Writers of the four Gospels by Name, and in their Order, fays, . That those alone (and no other Gospels) had been universally. received in the Church.'

The faithful Transmission of the Gospels to suture Ages, is a Point that will fall properly under the fifth general Head; and therefore I will shut up this first Head, after I have shewn in a few Words, that

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Iren. 1. 3. c. 11. <sup>2</sup> Clem. Alex. Strom, 1. 3. <sup>3</sup> Orig. Com. in Matth. p. 203. feveral

feveral of the Facts related in the Gospels, receive Confirmation from the Testimony of other Historians, both Fewish and Pagan, who lived at or near the Time. I have observed before, that it has never been denied by the Writers of either Sort, that there was fuch a Person as Jesus, who liv'd in Judea, and fuffer'd Death upon the Cross, at the Time mentioned in the Gospels. The Name which the Fews have given him with Reference to his Crucifixion (however reproachfully intended) is an Acknowledgment of the Truth of the Fact; for which, and for other Particulars relating to him, the Christians appealed to the 2 Accounts transmitted to Rome; according to the known Usage of the Governors making Returns thither, of the Transactions in their respective Provinces. All these Things concerning Christ, fays 3 Tertullian, were reported by Pilate to Tiberius Cæsar. The same is attested by 4 Tacitus, a Roman Historian of undoubted Credit; who speaking of the Christians, says, 'They take

Pilati. 3 Tertull. Apol. 4 Tacit. Annal.

1. 15. c. 44.

the Name from Christ, who was put to Death in the time of the Emperor Tiberius, by Pontius Pilate.' Nor did Julian himfelf, the bitterest Enemy that Christianity ever had, deny that there was such a Perfon, or affirm that there was no Foundation for the Truth of the Gospel History: On the contrary, he owns the Gospels to have been written by the Persons whose Names they bear, and only blames them for magnifying the Works of their Master beyond Measure, the Truth and Reality of which Works 2 Celsus also does in Effect acknowledge, when he ascribes them to Art Magick. Defences, which neither of these would have had Recourse to, if they could have prov'd that the Books themselves were spurious; nor would they have omitted to take the Advantage even of a Suspicion of their being spurious, but that they knew there was no Foundation for it.

There are many other Facts which the Evangelists relate, that are also attested both by Heathen and Jewish Writers. The Gospels frequently mention the Warnings which Christ gave his Disciples and Fol-

<sup>\*</sup> Cyril, lib. 6. & 10. \* First Past. Lett. p. 44.

lowers,

lowers, that they must reckon upon a State of great Trials and Sufferings for the Sake of his Religion; and ' Tacitus, Suetonius, and Pliny are Witnesses, how very terrible those Persecutions were. The Evangelists mention the Destruction of Jerusalem, as foretold by our Saviour; and the Account given of that Destruction by 2 Josephus the Tewifb Historian, which exactly corresponds with what they relate from the Mouth of Christ, is a Testimony to the Truth of that Relation. As the same Josephus has also confirmed the Truth of the Gospel History in general, by the Accounts he gives of the Roman & Governors, and the Jewish Œconomy at that Time; being agreeable, both as to Persons and Things, with the Accounts which the Evangelists give us of them. a skil al way saw bon spect to

II. The whole Scheme of Christianity, or the Gospel-Dispensation, was not fully open'd to the World by Christ himself in mediately, in the Course of his Ministry; but many Things were left by him to be deliver'd or explain'd

Tacit. Nero. Sueton. Nero. Plin. Ep. lib. 10.
First Past. Lett. p. 56.
Festus, &c. Sanhedrim, &c.

by his Apostles, whom he particularly inftructed, and commissioned, for that end. The Office of John the Baptist, was only to give notice that the Kingdom of Heaven, or of God, i. e. of the Messiah, was at hand, and to summon Men to Repentance as a necessary Qualification to be admitted Members of that Kingdom, and to escape the Wrath to come. Repent ye, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at band. The like Commission was given by Christ to the Twelve Apostles, when he first fent them forth; 2 As ye go, preach, faying, the Kingdom of Heaven is at band; and to the Seventy Disciples, when he sent them two and two before his Face into every City and Place whither he himself would come; 3 Say unto them, the Kingdom of God is come nigh unto you. In like manner, Jefus himfelf, 4 went about all the Cities and Villages, teaching in their Synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom, or the good News of the coming of the Messiah. But he was fo far from openly proclaiming or owning himself to be the Messiah, that he

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. iii. z. \* Matt. x. 7. 3 Luke x. 9. 4 Matt. ix. 35. industriously

industriously concealed it, left the Jews, who expected a temporal Deliverer from the Roman Yoke, should break out into Rebellion, and make him obnoxious to the Roman Power before the Completion of his Ministry. When Peter, in the Name of the Disciples, had declared to him their full Conviction. That he was Christ the Son of the living God; the Charge he immediately gave them, was, That they should tell no Man, that he was Jesus the Christ. When the unclean Spirits fell down before him, and cry'd, faying, a Thou art the Son of God, (a known Appellation of the Mefhab among the Jews) it immediately follows, That Jefus strictly charged them, that they should not make him known. After his Transfiguration upon the Mount, and a Voice from Heaven declaring him to be the Son of God; Jesus charges the three Disciples who were with him, That they should tell the Vision to no Man, until the Son of Man was risen again from the Dead. Nor did he ever make a publick Profession and Acknowledgment that he was the Messiah,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Matt. xvi. 16, 20. 
<sup>2</sup> Mark iii. 11, 12. 
Luke iv. 41. 
<sup>3</sup> Matt. xvii. 9.

till he was arraign'd, first before the ' Council of the Jews, and then before Pontius Pilate, i. e. after he had finish'd his Ministry upon Earth, and there was no Danger either that the People would raise a Sedition upon his Account, or that he should be arraign'd and put to Death before the appointed Time. But with regard to the People, the great Aim and Design of his Miniflry was, first to convince them by his Miracles that he was a Prophet fent from God; which being join'd to the general Expectation of the Messiah at that Time, might lead them to suppose that he was the Person; and then, to prepare them for the Reception of the Gospel, by taking off the carnal and corrupt Gloffes which the Scribes and Pharifees had put upon the Moral Law, and by laying open the Pride, Covetousness and Hypocrify of those Teachers: And this, in order to convince the People, how unfit they were to be Guides in Religion; and by that Means to fet them at Liberty from the Influence and Authority of Persons, whose Interest it was, and whose Endeavour it would be, to give all

Mark xiv. 62. Luke xxii. 70. John xviii. 37.

the Opposition they could to the Gospel, that they might preferve and maintain their own Power. But what he faid to the People concerning the Kingdom of Heaven or the Gospel-State, and the Nature and future Progress of it, was for the most part delivered in ' Parables; which he explain'd to his Disciples " when they were alone, to let them by Degrees into some Understanding of the Nature and Defign of that Spiritual Kingdom which he intended to establish; reserving the complete and perfect Discovery thereof, till he had finish'd the great Work of our Redemption by his Refurrection from the Dead, and had fully prepared them for the Publication of the Gospel, by fending the Holy Ghost to instruct and strengthen them. For we find in the Course of our Saviour's Ministry, that notwithstanding the Lights he occafionally gave them, their Knowledge of these things was very imperfect. He often complains of the Slowness of their 3 Understanding, in that they did not apprehend the Defign of his Parables, nor arrive

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii: 34. Mark iv. 11. <sup>2</sup> Mark iv. 34. <sup>3</sup> Matt. xv. 16. Mark vii. 18.

at a firm and stedfast Faith in him, by the frequent 'Opportunities they had of hearing his Doctrine and feeing his Miracles. When he first 2 began to shew them, that he must go unto Terusalem and suffer many things of the Elders and Chief Priests and Scribes, and be kill'd, and be raised again the third day; Peter, who had before made so full a Confession of his Belief that he was the Mesfiah, began to rebuke him for these Sayings, Be it far from thee, Lord, This shall not be unto thee. Upon which our Lord told him, That he favour'd not the things that be of God, but those that be of Men. And on a like Occasion St. Luke says, 3 That they understood none of these things, and this Saying was bid from them, neither knew they the things which were spoken. When the \* Samaritans would not receive him in his Way to Jerusalem, two other of his Disciples, James and John, who, together with Peter, were most conversant with him, defired Leave to command Fire to come down from Heaven, and consume them, as Elias bad

<sup>\*</sup> Matt. xvi. 8, 11. Mark viii. 14, 17, 21. 3 Matt, 4 Luke xvi. 21, 22, 23. 3 Luke xviii. 34. XX. 54. done

done in a like Case; and they received this Rebuke from him, Ye know not what manner of Spirit ye are of (i. e. how different the Spirit of the Gospel is from that of the Law) for the Son of Man is not come to destroy Men's Lives, but to save them. In the whole Course of his Ministry, they evidently reckon'd upon his fetting up a temporal Kingdom, and had 'Strifes among themselves which of them should then be the greatest; and even after his Resurrection, the Question they ask him upon that Head, is, 2 Whether he will at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel. All which, together with the Acts of forfaking and denying him, the Difficulty they shew'd in believing his Refurrection, and that Slowness of Heart with which he upbraided them for not 3 applying the Prophecies concerning him even after he had fuffer'd and was rifen from the Dead; are undeniable Testimonies, how imperfect Notions they had as yet of the Nature and Œconomy of the Gospel State, and how great Need there was of those further Instructions which

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Matt. xviii. 1. Matt. xx. 20, 24. Luke xxii. 24. <sup>2</sup> Acts i. 6. 
<sup>3</sup> Luke xxiv. 25.

he gave them during the forty Days, in which he was \* feen of them after his Refurrection, and spake of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God; and this, evidently, in order to qualify them for the due Discharge of the Commission they received from him immediately beforehis Ascension into Heaven, 2 Go ye, and teach all Nations.—3 Go into all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

III. The Apostles, in vertue of their Commission from Christ, being not only to testify and deliver to the World the things which they had seen and had been taught by Him, but further to open and explain the Gospel Dispensation; were under the Guidance and Assistance of the Holy Ghost, which they received according to his Promise, before they enter'd upon their Ministry.

The frequent Assurances they had from our Saviour that they should receive the Holy Ghost, are distinctly recorded in the four Evangelists; the Truth and Authority of whose Writings is fully shewn un-

<sup>\*</sup> Acts i. 3. \* Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. \* Mark. xvi. 15. der

der the first Head. But because the Proof of their having this, and several other Promises of our Saviour, punctually fulfill'd to them, do all depend upon Testimonies fetch'd from the Asts of the Apostles; it will be proper in this Place to establish the Credit of that History, in the fame manner that the Credit of the four Evangelifts has been already establish'd. And that the Writer of it was Luke the Evangelist, appears evidently by comparing the Introduction to his Gospel with that of the Acts. The Gospel begins thus: ' Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in Order a Declaration of those things which are most furely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the Beginning were Eye-Witnesses and Ministers of the Word: It feem'd good to me also, baving bad perfett Understanding of all things from the very first, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus. With express Refezence to this, the Acts of the Apostles begin thus: 2 The former Treatife bave I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the Day in which:

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he was taken up, &c. After this, by a vifible Connection of the History, he proceeds to relate what the Apostles did, immediately after our Saviour's Afcension; fo that no doubt has ever been made, but that the same Person was the Writer of both. That he was well qualified to write his Gospel, has been already shewn under the first Head; and the Evidences there laid down, conclude yet more strongly for the Authority of the 2 Acts of the Apostles; of many of which Acts, we are fure, he himself was an Eye and Ear-Witness. Citations out of this Book are found in 2 Clement the Companion of St. Paul, and in 5 Polyearp, the Disciple of St. John. 4 Irenæus, in the second Century, writing against the heretical Doctrine of two Principles (one Good, the other Evil) argues throughout one whole Chapter, from Passages taken at large out of the Book of Asts, to shew the Contrariety of that Herefy to the Doctrine of the Apostles. 5 Eusebius gives an Account of the same Book as follows:

5 Eufeb. I. 3. c. 4.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Acts xvi. &c. <sup>2</sup> Clem. Ep. ad. Corinth. S. 18. <sup>3</sup> Polycarp. ad Philip. S. 1. <sup>4</sup> Iren. l. 3. c. 12.

Luke,

#### PASTORAL LETTER. 24E

Luke, a native of Antioch, and a Physician by Profession, who had lived long and intimately with Paul, and was much conversant with the other Apostles, left two Books, written by Divine Inspiration; one of them, his Gospel—the other entitled, The Acts of the Apostles; which he did not write from the Relations of others, but as Facts which he saw with his own Eyes.' And resewhere, among the Books which were universally received, he reckons the Acts of the Apostles next to the four Evangelists.

Having established the Credit and Authority of those Writings which testify the Promise of the Holy Ghost, and the Mission thereof according to that Promise; I will now proceed to shew from the Evangelists, upon what Occasions and for what Ends the Promise was made. Our Saviour tells his Disciples, a little before his Death, I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now; and then he immediately adds, Howbeit, when he the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all. Truth: Agreeably to what he had tolds.

<sup>\*</sup> Euseb. 1. 3. c. 25. 2 John xvi. 12, 13,

them a little before; 'These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you: But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will fend in my Name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your Remembrance, what soever I have said unto you. Again, & I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that be may abide with you for ever, even the Spirit of Truth : And, & When the Comforter is come, whom I will fend unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me. When he tells them, they must be brought into the Synagogues, and unto Magistrates and Powers, he \* bids them take no Thought how or what thing they shall answer, or what they shall say; and then adds, For the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same Hour what ye ought to say: And, I will give you a Mouth and Wisdom, which all your Adversaries shall not be able to gainfay nor refift. When he fees them in Trouble, and finds that Sorrow had fill'd their

John xiv. 25, 26. John xiv. 16, 17.

John xv. 26. Luke xii. 11, 12. Luke
xxi. 15.

Hearts

Hearts at the Thoughts of his leaving them, he comforts them thus: " I tell you the Truth, it is expedient for you that I go away; for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart I will send bim unto you. When he had given them their Commission to preach the Gospel unto all Nations, he immediately adds, \* And behold I fend the Promise of my Father upon you; 3 but tarry ye in the City of Jerufalem, until we be endued with Power from on High: And, & Ye Shall receive Power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be Witnesses unto Me, both in ferusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost Part of the Earth. This Promise was fulfill'd on the Day of Pentecost, when they were with one Accord in one Place, and ' fuddenly there came a Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind, and filled all the House where they were sitting: And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and it fat upon each of them: And they were all fill'd with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> John xvi. 7. <sup>2</sup> Luke xxiv. 49. <sup>3</sup> Acts i. 4. Acts i. 8. <sup>5</sup> Acts ii. 1, 2, 3, 4, 7. Lo Spirit

Spirit gave them Utterance. And there being at that time devout Men out of every Nation who were come to Jerusalem to worship, every one heard them speak in his own Language wherein he was born. And while the People stand amaz'd at this, St. Peter tells them, That 'Jesus whom they had crucified, being raised from the Dead, and by the right Hand of God excited, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy Ghost, had shed forth that which they now saw and heard.

It appears by these Accounts, that the full and final Opening of the Gospel-Dispensation, was to be the Work of the Holy Ghost, directing the Apostles, and strengthening them in their Ministry, and enabling them by his Gifts to convey the Knowledge of it to all Nations, and to confirm it with undoubted Testimonies of a divine Commission and Authority. Whatever they had beard from Christ, or seen him do, the Holy Ghost brought fresh again to their Remembrance; the Truths which they could not bear in their more impersect State, the Holy Ghost instructed

them in, and made them fully apprehend; and by leading them into all Truth, he effectually fecured them against all Error. They were to preach the Gospel to all Nations, and he taught them the Languages of all. In the Course of their Ministry, they were to meet with great Trouble, Difficulty, and Persecution; and he inspired and supported them with suitable Supplies of Wisdom, Courage and Comfort. Thus encouraged, strengthened, and affisted, by the Holy Ghost, the Apostles went forth and preach'd every where; the Lord working. with them, and confirming the Word with Signs following; or, as it is elsewhere express'd, 2 God bearing them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles, and Gifts of the Holy Ghost. This is affirm'd on many Occasions; first, of all the Apostles in general, while they continued together at Ferusalem, That s many Wonders and Signs were done by their Hands. -That 4 with great Power they gave Witness to the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus .-That's by the Hands of the Apostles were many

Mark xvi. 20. \* Heb. ii. 4. 3 Acts ii. 43. 4 Acts iv. 33. 5 Acts v. 12.

Signs and Wonders wrought among the People: -That 'there came a Multitude out of. the Cities round about Jerusalem, bringing Sick Folks, and them which were vexed with unclean Spirits, and they were healed every one: And then, as wrought by particular Apostles; by 2 Peter, in the extraordinary Act of Power exercised upon Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Ghost; by 3 Peter and John, who upon the Occasion of curing a Man that was lame from his Mother's Womb, declared by what Power they and the other Apostles effected their miraculous Cures; In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk; And, Be it known unto you, and to all the People of Israel, that by the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom ye crucified, whom God raised from the Dead, by him doth this Man stand here before you whole: And St. Peter (upon his curing Eneas of the Pally) 5 Eneas, Tefus Christ maketh thee whole.

Nor had the Apostles only the Gifts of the Holy Ghost, and of Tongues and Mi-

racles, bestowed upon them, but these Powers were also by their Ministry conferred upon others. Our Saviour intimated, that Believers should receive Gifts of an extraordinary Nature; for St. John repeating what he had faid concerning r Rivers of Water that should flow out of him, adds, This spake be of the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive; for the Holy Ghost was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified: and fo our Saviour himfelf, 2 Verily, verily, I fay unto you, be that believeth on me, the Works that I do shall be do also, and greater Works than these; because I go unto my Father. And it is certain in Fact, that by Prayer, and laying on of Hands, the Gifts of the Holy Ghost were bestowed by the Apostles upon many of the Believers. After Peter and John had related to the Brethren at Jerufalem, the Threatnings of the High Priefts and Council of the Fews, it follows, 3 And now, Lord, behold their Threatnings, and grant unto thy Servants, that with all Boldness they

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> John vii. 39. <sup>2</sup> John xiv. 12. <sup>3</sup> Acts iv. 29, 30, 31.

may speak thy Word, by stretching forth thy Hand to heal, and that Signs and Wonders may be done by the Name of thy boly Child Tesus. And when they had prayed, the Place was shaken where they were affembled, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost. Again, when the Apostles which were at Ferusalem, heard that Samaria had received the Word of God (by the preaching of Philip the Evangelist) they sent unto them Peter and John, who when they were come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Ghost; then laid they their Hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. While: Peter was speaking to Cornelius and his Company, 2 the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word, and they heard them freak with Tongues and magnify God. To these we may add the Instances of Stephen and Philip, two of the feven Deacons; of the first of whom it is said, that 3 be did great Wonders and Miracles among the People; and of the fecond, that 4 Simon Magus himself wondered when he heard unclean Spirits crying with loud Voices, and faw those who were pos-

<sup>\*</sup> Acts viii. 14, 15, 17. 2 Acts x. 44, 46. 2 Acts vi. 8. 4 Acts viii. 7, 13, fessed.

sessed with them cured, and many taken with

Palsies and that were lame, bealed.

There is one Thing further observable, concerning the Miracles wrought by the Apostles and others, in Testimony of their divine Mission; and that is, The numerous Conversions to the Christian Faith which were made by them. Upon hearing the Apostles speak all Sorts of Tongues on the Day of Pentecost, 'there were added to them above three Thousand Souls: Upon the Cure of the lame Man by Peter and John, and the Occasion they took from thence to recommend and enforce the Doctrine of the Gospel, many of them which heard the Word believed, 2 and the Number of the Men was about five Thousand: Upon the many Signs and Wonders which were wrought by the Apostles among the People, 3 Believers were the more added to the Lord, Multitudes both of Men and Women: Upon Philip's preaching the Gospel at Samaria, 4 the People with one Accord gave beed unto those Things which be spake; bearing and seeing the Miracles which be did; and even Simon, he who had

bewitched

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Acts ii. 41. <sup>2</sup> Acts iv. 4. <sup>3</sup> Acts v. 12, 14. <sup>4</sup> Acts viii. 6. <sup>5</sup> Acts viii. 9, 10, 13.

bewitched them with his Sorceries, and to whom they had given all heed from the highest to the lowest as the great Power of God, was baptized, and continued with Philip, and wondered, beholding the Miracles and Signs which were done.

Thus far, of the Apostles and Disciples of our Lord; of the Commission they had from him to preach the Gospel, and their Qualifications for the effectual Discharge of that Commission, by the Instructions they received from his own Mouth, by the further Lights which the Holy Ghost gave them, and by the Gift of Tongues and the Power of Miracles, to enable them to propagate and establish the Truths they preach'd.

But as St. Paul also was a glorious Infirument in carrying on that great Work, and both his Commission and Instructions were conveyed in a Method different from the rest, it will be necessary to give a particular Account of both, in order to lay a sure Foundation for the Authority of the several Epistles written by him. The Account of his miraculous Conversion is deliver'd by St. Luke in the Alls of the Apostles, and

<sup>4</sup> Acts ix. 3. —xxii. 3. —xxvi. 12.

by himself in the same Book, in his two Defences before Lyfias and Festus, first at " Ferusalem, and then at Cæsarea. And his immediate Mission from Christ is thus expressed, I have appeared unto thee for this Purpose, to make thee a Minister and a Witness both of these Things which thou hast seen, and of those Things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the People, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I. now send thee, To open their Eyes, and to turn them from Darkness to Light, and from the Power of Satan unto God. And fo Ananias, to whom he was directed by the heavenly Vision, relates what Christ had revealed to him concerning Paul; 2 He is a chosen Vessel unto me, to bear my Name before the Gentiles, and Kings, and the Children of Israel: And, 3 The Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the Way as thou camest, bath fent me, that thou mightest receive thy Sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And again, 4 The God of our Fathers bath chosen thee, that thou shouldest know his Will, and see that Just one, and shouldest hear the

ix. 15. 3 Acts ix. 17. 4 Acts xxii. 21. 2 Acts

Voice of his Mouth: For thou shalt be his Witness unto all Men, of what thou hast seen and beard. And whereas the other Apoftles stile themselves, in the Beginning of their Epistles, the Servants and the Apostles of Christ, St. Paul's Style concerning himfelf is, ' Called to be an Apostle, -Separated unto the Gospel of God; and, 2 An Apostle not of Man, neither by Man, but by Jesus Christ and God the Father. And as to his Doctrine, he tells the Corintbians on Occafion of his speaking of the Institution of the last Supper, 3 I have received of the Lord that which I also delivered unto you; and speaking of the Death and Resurrection of Christ, 4 I delivered unto you that which I also received; and of his Doctrine in General, 5 The Gospel which was preached of me, was not after Man; for I neither received it of Man, neither was I taught it, but by the Revelation of Fefus Christ.

To this Account of his Mission and Doctrine, we must add, that both were justified and confirmed by many and great Miracles.

Rom. i. 1. 1 Cor. i. 1. 2 Cor. i. 1. Eph. i. 1. Colof. i. 1. 2 Tim. i. 1. 2 Gal. i. 1. 3 1 Cor. xi. 23. 4 1 Cor. xv. 3. 5 Gal. i. 11, 12.

It is faid of Paul and Barnabas when at Iconium, 1 Long time therefore abode they, speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave Testimony to the Word of his Grace, and granted Signs and Wonders to be done by their Hands; and at Ephefus, 2 God wrought special Miracles by the Hands of Paul; so that from his Body were brought unto the Sick, Handkerchiefs or Aprons, and the Diseases departed from them and the evil Spirits went out of them. In Cyprus, an Act of Extraordinary Power was exercised on Elymasthe Sorcerer, whom-Paul, moved by the Holy Ghost, struck with Blindness for endeavouring to turn away the Deputy from the Faith. At Lyftra, be commanded the lame Man to stand upright on his Feet, and he leaped and walked. At Philippi, where was a Damfel poffeffed with a Spirit of Divination, Paul faid to the Spirit, 5 I command thee in the Name of Jesus Christ to come out of ber, and he came out the same Hour. In Melita, the Father of the chief Man of the Island lay sick of a Fever and Bloody Flux; 6 To whom Paul

Acts xiv. 3. 2 Acts xix. 11, 12.

Acts xiv. 3.
3 Acts xiii. 10, 11.
6 Acts xxviii. 8, 9.

enter'd in, and laid his Hands on him and healed him: And, when this was done, others also who had Diseases in the Island, came and were healed. And for the Success of his Ministry, thus supported and enforced by the Testimony of Miracles, we may appeal, not only to the particular Conversions mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles as the Effects of them, but to the Number of Churches which were founded by him; many of them in some of the most populous Cities and Countries.

One thing more I must observe, That as the rest of the Apostles had the Power of conferring the Gifts of the Holy Ghost upon others, so Paul had the same Power: For it is said of the Converts to Christianity whom he found at Epbesus, 2 That when he had laid his Hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them, and they spake with Tongues, and prophesied.

IV. What the things are relating to the Gospel Dispensation, which the Apostles were to open and explain, pursuant to the Commission and Instruction received from Christ, and un-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Acts xiii. 12. —xiv. 14. —xvi. 33.

<sup>3</sup> Acts xix. 6.

der the Guidance and Assistance of the Holy Ghost; must, in Conjunction with the Gospels. be learnt from their Preaching and Writings, as delivered to us in their Acts and Epistles. Some of the Doctrines, which they were charged by Christ to deliver to the World, are recorded in the four Gospels, as being Part of the Instructions they received from himself; but as it is very certain that all the Instructions which he deliver'd to his Disciples are not recorded in the Gofpels, fo it is no less certain, that many of the Things which he did deliver to them during the Course of his Ministry, were delivered in an obscure Manner, and not understood by them at the Time; particularly, those relating to the Nature of his Kingdom, his Death, and his Refurrection. His ordinary Way of teaching the People, was by Parables. All these things spake Jesus to the Multitude in Parables, and without a Parable spake he not unto them; With many such Parables spake he the Word unto them, as they were able to hear it; but without a Parable spake he not unto them. 'Tis added indeed, that when they were alone,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Matt. xiii. 34. \* Mark iv. 33, 34.

he expounded all Things to his Disciples; but they so little understood them, that, 'as I observed before, he often upbraids them with their Slowness of Apprehension and Want of Faith; and, of those Expositions, but few are recorded. A little before his Death, he tells them, 2 I bave yet many Things to fay unto you, but you cannot bear them now; and then immediately adds, Howbeit when the Spirit of Truth is come, he will guide you into all Truth; where he evidently leaves the many Things he had to fay, which they could not then bear, to be revealed to them by the Holy Ghoft, who was alfo to bring to their Remembrance all that he himself had delivered to them. After his Resurrection, he was seen of the Apostles 3 forty Days, speaking of the Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God; but what the Things were that he delivered to them in those forty Days, is no where recorded. Nor indeed could the great Work of the Redemption of Mankind, which mainly depended upon his dying and rifing again, be fet forth and explained, till after his Refurrection: when, upon Occasion of their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Page 235. <sup>2</sup> John xvi. 12, 13. <sup>3</sup> Acts i. 3.

Doubts concerning the Reality of it, he shewed them out of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms, that he was to suffer and rise again, and opened their Understandings that they might understand the Scriptures. I will only add as to St. Paul, that the same Doctrines which were conveyed to the other Apostles, first by the Teaching of Christ, and then by the Light and Direction of the Holy Ghost, were fully made known to him by immediate Revelation.

The Apostles being thus instructed in the whole Will of Christ, were properly his Messengers, to convey and deliver it to the World & As my Father hath sent me, so send I you— Go ye unto all the World, and preach the Gospel to every Creature.— Teaching them to observe all Things what soever I have commanded you.) And from whom are we to learn the Will of Christ, but from his own Messengers, whom he fully instructed in it, and intrusted with the delivering it to the World? They were the Ambassadors of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Luke xxiv. 27, 44, 45. <sup>2</sup> See before, p. 251. <sup>3</sup> John xx. 21. <sup>4</sup> Mark xvi. 15. <sup>5</sup> Matt. xxviii. 20.

Christ to pray us in his Stead to be reconcil'd to God; and from whom therefore. but from them, are we to learn the Terms of that Reconciliation, and the Grounds of that great Favour and Mercy extended by God to Mankind? They were in a particular Manner appointed to be Witnesses of his 2 Resurrection; and from what other Hands, but these that were intrusted with publishing the Doctrines of the Resurrection, can we learn the Importance of it, and the Benefits accruing to Mankind by it? Those Ambassadors and Messengers were endowed with the Power of working Miracles; and for what End should this be, but to prove the Divinity of their Commission, and to recommend their Doctrines to our Attention and Belief? In general, the Apostles were appointed by Christ to be 3 the Light of the World; and how was that Light to be conveyed to future Generations, otherwife than by their Preachings and Writings?

Supposing then that the Writings of the Apostles, and the Accounts we have of their

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. v. 20. <sup>2</sup> Acts i. 22. -v. 32. -x. 41. <sup>3</sup> Matt. v. 14. Preaching,

Preaching, are true and genuine, i. e. that they were really written by the Persons whose Names they bear; no Doubt can remain, but that the Things relating to the Gospel Dispensation (which were to be opened and explained by them, pursuant to the Instructions received from Christ, and under the Direction of the Holy Ghost) are to be learnt from their Acts and Epistles, in Conjunction with the four Gospels. The Authority of the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles I have already established, and shall now proceed to shew, that the Epistles also were the genuine Writings of the Apostles.

New Testament which were universally received, after mention made of the four Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles, adds, Next to these we are to reckon the Epistles of Paul; every one of which (except that to the Hebrews) expressly bears his Name; and they are frequently cited and referred to by the most early Writers of the Church, as has been abundantly shewn by many learned Men, and may easily be seen by

\* Euseb. 1. 3. c. 25.

looking into the Writings of Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp in the first and second Centuries, and after them, into those of Irenœus and Tertullian. The same Thing is there affirmed by Eusebius, of the first Epistle of St. Peter, and the first of St. Fobn; namely, that they had been received univerfally. And as to the Doubts that have been raifed concerning other Epistles; it must be premised in general, that no Advantage can accrue from thence to the Adversaries of the Christian Religion, till they point out the particular Doctrines relating to Faith or Manners, which are contained in those, that are not also contained either expresly, or by fair and clear Deduction, in the other Books of the New Testament, which the Church of Christ has universally received. Much less can they reap any Advantage from those Doubts, if it shall be made appear that in every Instance they are ill founded.

As to the Epistle to the Hebrews; the main Doubt concerning it has arisen from its not being expressy under the Name of St. Paul, as all his other Epistles are; but this receives a very plain and natural Solution.

tion. St. Paul was properly the Apostle of the Gentiles, as appears from many Paffages both in the Book of Atts, and in his own Epistles. The Direction he received from Christ was this, Make bast, and get thee quickly out of Ferusalem, for they will not receive thy Testimony concerning me; and, Depart, for I will fend thee far bence to the Gentiles. In his Epiftles he speaks of himfelf as the 2 Apostle of the Gentiles, as the Minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, and as the Prisoner of Jesus Christ for the Gentiles; as he, to whom it pleased God to reveal his Son, that he might preach him among the Heathen; he, s to whom this Grace or Commission was given that be should preach among the Gentiles; he, 6 who was appointed a Teacher of the Gentiles; he, whom the Lord strengthened, that by him the Preaching might be fully known, and that all the Gentiles might bear. All which are briefly comprehended in the Declaration he made to the Galatians; 8 The Gospel of the Uncircumcision was committed unto me, as

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Acts xxii. 18, 21. <sup>2</sup> Rom. xi, 13. <sup>3</sup>—xv, 16. <sup>4</sup> Gal. i. 16. <sup>5</sup> Ephef. iii. 3. <sup>6</sup> 2 Tim. i. 18. <sup>7</sup> 2 Tim. iv. 17. <sup>8</sup> Gal. ii 7.

the Gospel of the Circumcision was unto Peter; for he that wrought effectually in Peter to the Apostleship of the Circumcision, the same was mighty in me towards the Gentiles. 'Tis true, the Apostolical Commission was general, 'To preach the Gospel,' and there are many Instances of St. Paul's endeavouring to convert those of the Jewish Nation, and of his going into their Synagogues, and reasoning with them. This he did at \* Salamis, at \* Iconium, at 3 The salonica, at 4 Berea, at 5 Corinth, and at 6 Ephefus. At Theffalonica, particularly, it is faid that Paul, as his Manner was, went in unto them, and three Sabbath Days reasoned with them out of the Scriptures: At Ephesus, he 7 went into the Synagogue, and spake boldly for the Space of three Months, disputing and perfuading the Things concerning the Kingdom of God: And he tells the Elders of the Church, 8 That he had testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, Repentance towards God, and Faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ. And at 9 Antioch, where the Jews contra-

dicted

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii, 5. —xiii. 16. 2 — xiv. 1, 3 —xvii. 1. 4 — xvii. 10. 5 —xviii. 4. 6 —xviii. 19. 7 — xix. 8. 8 — xx. 21. 9 —xiii. 46,

dicted and blasphemed, he tells them, It was necessary that the Word of God should first bave been spoken to them; but seeing they put it from them, and judged themselves unworthy of everlasting Life, he turned to the Gentiles. And to how great a Height the Prejudices of the Jews against him had rifen by degrees, we may gather from the furious Affault that was made upon him at 7erufalem, and their crying out, ' Men of Ifrael, help; this is the Man, that teacheth all Men every where against the People and the Law, and this Place; while his Affection to the whole Jewish Nation, and his Concern for them was such, as to make him even 2 wish that himself were accursed from Christ, for bis Brethren, bis Kinsmen according to the Flesh.

It appears from the foregoing Accounts, how natural it was for St. Paul to write as well as preach to the Jews; and how natural also, in writing to them, to avoid the Authoritative Style that he used when he wrote to those Churches which had been converted by him, or which were more peculiarly within his Commission, and to

\*Acts xxi. 28. \* Rom. ix. 3.

chuse to write to them only as his Brethren and Kinsmen, that is, in his own Language, as he and they were equally 'Hebrews, and Israelites, and the Seed of Abraham.

But, notwithstanding the Omission of his Name, and of his Apostolical Character, there are many cogent Arguments to fatisfy us, that St. Paul was the Author of this Epiftle, against the contrary Suspicions of fome learned Men. The general Scope of it is to prove, that the Rites prescribed by the Ceremonial Law, were only Types and Figures of Christ, and that He being now come, they were of no further Use, but were to cease and give Way to a Dispenfation of a much higher and more excellent Nature. And what was the Accufation brought against St. Paul by the Jews? Why, 2 That he taught all the Jews which were among the Gentiles, to forfake Moses, Saying that they ought not to circumcife their Children, neither to walk after the Customs; and, That he taught all Men every where against the People and the Law, and the Temple .- The Writer of this Epistle uses the Style of 3 our Brother Timothy; and this

3 Heb. xiii. 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. xi. 22. <sup>2</sup> Acts xxi. 21, 28.

is what we find frequently used by St. Paul in his other Epistles. Paul an Apostle of Fefus Christ, and Timothy our Brother, is the Introduction to three of them; and writing to the Theffalonians, he fays, 2 I have sent Timotheus our Brother; nor do we find this Style used by any other of the Apoftles .- The fame is observable of another Expression towards the Conclufion of this Epistle, 3 Pray for us; being what we also find in his Epistles both to the 4 Colossians and 5 The falonians; with others of the fame Import in those to the Romans and Ephefians, where he befeeches them to 6 strive together in their Prayers to God for him, and 7 to pray always with all Prayer and Supplication for him; nor is this used by any other Apostle. This 8 Epistle, towards the Conclusion, has a folemn Prayer. to the God of Peace, for a Bleffing upon the Christians to whom he is writing; and we find the like, towards the Conclusion of his Epistle to the 9 Romans, The God of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. i. 1. Coloff. i. 1. Philem. 1. <sup>2</sup> 1 Thef. iii. 2. <sup>3</sup> Heb. xiii. 18. <sup>4</sup> Col. iv. 3. <sup>5</sup> 2 Thef. iii. 1. <sup>6</sup> Rom. xv. 30. <sup>7</sup> Ephef. vi. 18. <sup>8</sup> Heb. xiii. 20. <sup>9</sup> Rom. xv. 33. —xvi. 20.

Peace be with you all; and to the " Corinthians, The God of Love and Peace shall be with you; to the 2 Philippians, The God of Peace shall be with you, and to the 3 Thefsalonians, The very God of Peace Santtify you wholly, and, 4 The Lord of Peace himself give you Peace always; and the like Expression is not only thus frequent in St. Paul's Epiftles, but is not to be met with in any other.—The same is to be said of the Term 3 Mediator; for tho' the Thing be spoken of in other Parts of the New Testament, the Term is not found any where, but in the Writings of St. Paul. - In this Epiftle he speaks of his Imprisonment, under the Name of Bonds; and he mentions the fame at least ten times in his other Epistles, and all of them written from Italy, as this to the Hebrews was; neither do we find that Expression used by any other Apostle. -In this Epiftle, he pleads the Integrity of his Heart and Conscience, We trust we have a good Conscience, in all things willing to live boneftly; and the same Plea is often made

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 11. <sup>2</sup> Phil iv. 9. <sup>3</sup> 1 Theff. v. 23. <sup>4</sup> 2 Theff. iii. 16. <sup>5</sup> Heb. viii. 6. -ix. 15. -xii. 24. <sup>6</sup> Heb. xiii. 18.

by him on other Occasions: Thus his Declaration before the Council was, Men and Brethren, I have lived in all good Confcience before God unto this Day; and before Felix, 2 Herein do I exercise myself, to have always a Conscience void of Offence towards God and towards Men; and in his Epistle to the Romans, 3 I fay the Truth in Christ, I lie not, my Conscience also bearing me Witness; to the Corinthians, speaking of himself, 4 Our Rejoycing is this, the Testimony of our Conscience; and to Timothy. Whom I serve with pure Conscience. This Epistle concludes with a Salutation to and from the Brethren; which is found at the End of almost every Epistle of St. Paul; and the Christians are here called Saints, which is a Style very frequently used by that Apostle, and almost peculiar to him.

To this Epistle 6 St. Peter may well be understood to refer as written by St. Paul, where he is exhorting the Jewish Christians under Persecution, to wait with Patience for the Day of the Lord, and to take care

<sup>\*</sup> Acts xxiii. 1. 2 Acts xxiv. 16. 3 Rom. ix. 1. 2 Cor. i. 12. 5 2 Tim. i. 3. 6 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16. M 6

to be found of him without Spot and blameless, that it might be Salvation to them; and this, in answer to the Scoffers of those Days, who upbraided them with the Expellation of it, as vain and groundless, and, by way of Derision, ask'd, Where is the Promise of bis Coming? And then St. Peter adds, Even as our beloved Brother Paul alfo. according to the Wisdom given unto bim, bath written uuto you; which most probably relates to this Epiftle, as the only one that he wrote to the Jewish Christians, and as containing in it feveral Exhortations to the fame Purpose with that which St. Peter is there giving. For, not to infift upon his Exhortation to the Hebrews, 1 to be Fellowers of them who through Faith and Patience inherited the Promises, enforced by the Example of Abraham, who after he had patiently endured, obtain'd the Promise; nor upon that other Exhortation, 2 Let us hold fast the Profession of our Faith without wavering, for be is faithful that promifed; not, I fay, to rest upon these, it will be hard to find in the whole New Testament any Passage to which St. Peter might so

<sup>3</sup> Heb. vi. 12, 15.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 23. probably

probably refer, as this which follows: "Cast not away your Confidence, which bath great Recompence of Reward: For ye have need of Patience, that after ye have done the Will of God, ye might receive the Promise: For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry: Now, the Just shall live by Faith; but if any Man draw back, my Soul shall have no Pleasure in him: But we are not of them who draw back unto Perdition, but of them that believe to the Saving of the Soul. As to the Paffage in St. Paul's Epistle to the 2 Romans, which speaks of the Goodness and Forbearance and Leng-suffering of God, as leading to Repentance; St. Peter cannot be supposed to refer to it, for two plain Reasons. In that Passage, St. Paul addresses himself to the Unbelieving Jews; whereas St. Peter is writing to the Believing Jews, and to them only. St. Paul's is a Reproof for abusing the Goodness and Long-suffering of God to a Security in finning, contrary to the Effect it ought to have upon wicked Men; but St. Peter's is an Exhortation to fincere Christians to wait with Patience, in an Assu-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Heb. x. 35, 36, &c. <sup>2</sup> Rom. ii. 4.

rance that it will bring Salvation in the End.

Under the present Head of Internal Testimony, Notice must be taken of a Passage in this Epistle, which may feem at first fight to imply, that St. Paul was not the Writer of it. Speaking of the Salvation of Sinners through the Gospel, he fays, Which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirm'd unto Us by them that heard bim; whereas St. Paul had the Gospel reveal'd to him immediately from Heaven. But to this there are two plain Answers: One, That St. Paul, between his Conversion and the Time when this Epistle was written, had seen and convers'd with several of the Apostles. 2 After three Years, fays he, I went up to Jerusalem to fee Peter, and abode with him fifteen Days; and he tells us, that at the same time he faw James, the Brother of our Lord .-3 Then, fourteen Years after I went up to 7erusalem, - and communicated to them that Gospel which I preach'd among the Gentiles; and there he faw Peter, James, and John, and after that he faw Peter at Antioch. that St. Paul might truly fay, that the <sup>2</sup> Heb. ii. 3. <sup>2</sup> Gal. i. 18, 19. <sup>3</sup> Gal. ii. 1, 9, 11. Doctrine

Doctrine of the Gospel was confirm'd to him by them that heard Christ; and he had Occasion to say it, lest it should be objected to him by the Jewish Christians, that his Doctrine was different from that of the other Apostles; against whom it was a proper Defence, that it was no other Doctrine than that which had been confirm'd by their own Apostles, who heard Christ, and had at first preached the Gospel to them. The other Answer is, that it is not uncommon with St. Paul to include himfelf in the Number of those to whom he writes, tho' not concern'd equally with them, or not at all: Let us not commit Fornication. - Let us not tempt Christ. - 2 We ourselves (speaking of the Gentile State ) were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers Lusts and Pleasures, living in Malice and Envy, bateful, and bating one another.

Besides the Internal Proofs that St. Paul was the Writer of this Epistle there are Proofs External, and those both numerous and express. Not to mention in this Place the Citations of the most early Fathers out of this Epistle, as being only Proofs of the

<sup>1</sup> Cor. x. 8, 9. 2 Tit. iii. 3.

Authority, and not of the Author, and made by Writers who rarely mention the Name of the Apostle whose Words they cite: In the second Century, 1 Clemens Alexandrinus mentions it under the Name of St. Paul, where speaking of the Greek Philosophy, as styl'd by that Apostle, Elements or Introductions to the Truth, and expresly mentioning him by Name, he adds, And therefore writing to the Hebrews, he faith, 2 Ye have need that one teach you again, which be the Elements (or first Principles) of the Oracles of God. And a elsewhere, having cited a Passage of St. Paul's Epistle to Titus concerning the Behaviour of the elder Women in Quietness and Sobriety, That the Word of God be not blasphemed, he immediately adds, \* But rather, says the same Apostle, follow Peace with all Men, &c. repeating four Verses of the Epistle to the Hebrews. So alfo ' Origen, in the third Century, having quoted these Words out of St. Paul's Epistle to the Corinthians, I have fed you with Milk, and not with Meat, adds this;

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Clem. Alex. Strom. 1. 6. §. 8. Col. ii. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. v. 12. <sup>3</sup> Clem. Alex. Strom. 1. 4. §. 20.

<sup>4</sup> Heb. xii. 13, 14, 15. —xiii. 4. <sup>5</sup> Orig. contr.

Celf. 1. 3. p. 143. <sup>6</sup> 1 Cor. iii. 2.

The

The same Person saith, I Te are become such as have need of Milk, and not of strong Meat, and then he goes on to repeat two other intire Verses out of this Epistle to the 2 Hebrews. And 3 elsewhere, having cited Pasfages out of the other Epiftles of St. Paul, he adds parallel Passages out of the Epistle to the Hebrews, with this or the like Connection, The same Apostle saith. In his Homilies upon this Epistle he accounts for the Difference between it and St. Paul's other Epiftles in point of Style, by supposing that the Matter was his, but that it was composed and methodized by some other Hand. And therefore he commends those Churches which receiv'd it as St. Paul's, because, as he adds, the Antients did not ascribe it to bim rashly. And that which follows, of some of the Antients ascribing it to St. Clement, and some to St. Luke, evidently refers to the supposed Penman, and not to the Author; to the Language only, and not at all to the Matter.

In the next Century, the 4 Council of

Laodicea

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Heb. v. 12, 13, 14.

<sup>3</sup> Orig. Philocal. p. 10, 17. adv. Celf. 1. 7. p. 351. and in other Places. Euleb. 1. 6. c. 25.

<sup>4</sup> Concil. Laod. Can. 60.

Laodicea enumerating the known and received Books of the New Testament, place in their Course, The fourteen Epistles of St. Paul, to the Romans one, to the Corinthians two, &c. and to the Hebrews one: To which I will add the Testimonies of two Writers, one of the Greek and the other of the Latin Church. I mean Eusebius and Ferome; who had made more nice and strict Enquiries than any other about the Books of the Old and New Testament, and the Writers of them. 1 Eusebius, speaking of the received Books of the New Teftament, deliver'd his own Judgment, That the fourteen Epiftles of St. Paul [which includes that to the Hebrews] are known and clear. Afterwards, speaking of 2 Clement's Epistle to the Corinthians, in which, says he, are inserted several Passages out of the Epistle to the Hebrews, and sometimes in the very Words, he adds, ' From whence it is most evident, that this cannot be a modern Writing [St. Clement having been a Disciple and Companion of St. Paul, and then he goes on, Wherefore it feems with good

Euseb. 1. 3. c. 3. —1. 6. c. 20. 2 —1. 3. c. 38.

Reason to be added to his other Epistles. For St. Paul baving written to the Hebrews in their own Language, the Translation of it [into the Greek Tongue] is afcrib'd by some to St. Luke, and by others to Clement. Which Testimonies warrant what we find in ' Theodoret, in the Preface to his Commentary upon this Epistle, Eusebius confes'd, that this was the Epistle of the most divine Paul, and affirm'd, that all the Ancients were of that Opinion; And & Photius a Collector in the ninth Century, at the same time that he cites an obscure 3 Writer who had said that Hyppolitus and Irenaus did not believe this Epistle to be St. Paul's, immediately adds, But Clement, and Eusebius, and the main Body of the divine Fathers, reckon this among his other Epiftles. And the fame \* Photius mentions that Opinion of Hyppolitus, as one, among others, of his crude and indigested Affertions.

'Tis true, ' Eusebius takes Notice, that some did not receive the Epistle to the Hebrews, because they said it was not received

Theodoret. Pref. 2 Phot. Bibl. Cod. 232.

Gobarus. 4 Phot. Bibl. c. 121. 5 Eufeb.

1. 3. c. 3.

by the Roman Church; which he particularly affirms of Caius, and adds, in a more qualified Sense, ' That some of the Romans did not suppose it to be bis. But it must be remember'd, that Caius advanc'd this Opinion in a Dispute with 2 one, who affirm'd that Christians 3 falling from the Faith, ought not to be admitted to Penance, and who, without doubt, alledged against Caius that Passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews: It is impossible for those who were once enlighten'd, and have tasted of the beavenly Gift, and were made Partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good Word of God, and the Power of the World to come; if they shall fall away, to renew them again to Repentance. And as this became a common Controversy in the Latin Church, which maintain'd the Opinion of Caius for restoring lapsed Christians, against the Montanists first, and then against the Novatians; it was natural, in the Heat of Dispute, to endeavour to weaken the Force of that Text, by raising a Doubt whether St. Paul, whose Name was not set to this

Euseb. 1. 6. c. 20. Proclus. Lapsi.

4 Tertull. de Pudic. c. 20. Heb. vi. 4, 5, 6.
Epistle

Epistle as it is to the rest, was the Author of it. But, that the Doubts concerning the Authority of it were not the same in the Latin Church from the Beginning, may be fairly presum'd from this Epistle's being inferted among the others, in the ancient Latin Version of the New Testament, which was made for the Use of that Church.

St. Ferome, who occasionally takes Notice, that tho' it was receiv'd as St. Paul's by some of the Latin Church, yet many doubted of it; expresly condemns them for it, and confronts that Doubt with the Authority of the Greek Church and all the Eastern Churches, who unanimously received it; and who, undoubtedly, had a better Opportunity than the Latin Church, to enquire into the Authority of it. Which Determination, as of a Point in Question before him, makes it plain, that his mentioning it with Tokens of Doubt in some other Places where he only quotes it occasionally, was not the Result of his own Judgment, but a Deference he paid to the Opinion of the Latin Church. And as He expresly declar'd his own Satisfaction, upon

Hieron, Ep. ad Dardan. -ad Evagr.

the Authority of the Ancients, 'That it was rightly ascrib'd to St. Paul, ' so has the whole Latin Church shewn themselves to be convinced of their Error, by having for fo many Ages received and inferted it among his other Epiftles.

That which gave the main Ground of Dispute concerning the Writer of this Epiftle, was the want of St. Paul's Name at the Beginning, 2 which has been already accounted for; and this led the Critical Enquirers into Words and Phrases, to infift upon the Argument from the Style and Manner of writing in this Epistle, as different from that of St. Paul in his other Epiftles. The Manner of Writing, fay they, is more lofty, and the Style raifed to a greater Height, than in his other Epistles. But if it be, the Subject also is more lofty and exalted. 'The Dignity of Christ above the Angels, 'The Glory of Christ at the Right-hand of God, 'The heavenly Tabernacle, 'The everlafting Priesthood, 'Christ's mediating and interceding for us in the Presence of God; And, in general, all those high and hea-" Mill. Proleg. p. 26. 2 p. 260, &c.

venly

venly Things, of which the legal Performances under the Mosaical Law were only Types and Figures; together with the Wonders wrought by the Patriarchs, Martyrs, and other famous Men, in vertue of their Faith. And therefore the Difference in Style is of little Force in any Case, since it is very common for the same Writer to vary his Style, according to the Subject, the Occasion, the Degrees of Earnestness, &c. so here it is of no Force at all, when fet up in ' Opposition to the Testimony of the best and most approved Writers among the Ancients; and when it is further confider'd, that the Attempts to ascribe the Epistle to others (Luke, Clement, Apollos) are founded only upon fome remote Conjectures, and not countenanc'd by ancient Testimonies; otherwise than as they are consider'd under the Character of Writers and Reporters of St. Paul's Doctrine. To which I must add, that those early Differences in Opinion were not fo much about the Authority of the Book, as about the Author; they who had their Doubts whether St. Paul was the Writer, readily ac-

See before, p. 272.

knowledging that the Epiftle came from a Person divinely inspired. This was the Case with all those of old, who believed it to be written in Hebrew by St. Paul, and translated into Greek by some one of the Apostolical Persons just now mentioned (which, whether true or not, was a prevailing Opinion among the Ancients;) and also with those others, who supposed it to be drawn up by some Apostolical Person, agreeably to the Sense and Meaning of St. Paul; and with Tertullian, who afcrib'd it to Barnabas, an Apostle, and Companion of St. Paul. And the fame has been the Case with more modern Writers; as appears by the Declarations of two Divines (both of them remarkable for a Latitude of Thought in religious Matters) even while they are giving their Reasons, why they do not think it to have been written by St. Paul. 2 It does not feem, fays one, to bave been written by St. Paul, but neither can it be clearly deny'd to be his. For 'tis probable, it was written by one of St. Paul's Companions, with his Privity, and agreeably to

Tertull. de Pudic. c. 20. Acts xiii. 2, 4.

bis Dostrine: to which he adds, ' I acknowledge the divine Authority of this Epistle.' And, fays another, Whoever reads it with Attention, will see every where the Apostolical Doctrine concerning the controverses between the Christians and Jews or Judaising Christians of those Days; from whence he infers, 'That it must be written before the Deftruction of the Temple, because after that, and the Extinction of the Levitical Worship, and the Destruction of a great Part of the Tewish Nation, there could scarce be any Occasion for entring into those Controverfies; nor is there in it the least Footstep of any Opinions, Disputes, or Matters, later than the Apostolick Age.' And again, Neither the Matter, nor the Manner of explaining, nor the Language, breathe any thing but what is Apostolical, and of divine Inspiration; in which, I and all others who have written concerning this Epiftle, do agree; bowever we may differ about the Author.

Besides this Epistle to the Hebrews, there were some others that the whole 2 Christian Church did not receive so soon as those already mentioned concerning which there

Le Clerc, Hist. Eccl. Ann. 69. 2 Page 259.

was never any Doubt. These are, the Epistle of St. Fames, the Second Epistle of St. Peter, the second and third of St. John. and that of St. Jude. Concerning these, it shall be particularly shewn, that each of them was received early; and there is this plain Reason, why they were not received by all Christians so early as the rest, That they were written either to particular Perfons, as the fecond and third of St. John, or to the Jewish Converts dispersed in several Countries, as the second of St. Peter and St. James, or to the Christians in general, as the Epistle of St. Jude. And fince the Satisfaction to be given to particular Churches that they were genuine, depended upon the View of the Original Letters, and of the Evidence of those who carried and those who received them; it is manifest at first fight, that this Satisfaction might be had much more readily, when it was known to what peculiar Churches this or that Epistle was directed, and where the Originals remained, and both the Messenger and they who received it from his Hands might be spoke with; than it could be had where the Epistles were directed to Christians

Christians in general as dispersed throughout the Empire, and while it remained uncertain, in what particular City or Country either the Originals or the Evidences of their being fo were to be met with. The not receiving these so early and universally as the rest, is an Argument of the Care taken by particular Churches to be thoroughly fatisfied, that what they admitted was really written by Perfons divinely inspir'd; and the receiving them fo universally as they afterwards did, is as good an Argument that they received due Satisfaction concerning them. Nor can any possible Reason be assigned, why the whole Christian Church, Eastern and Western, should for fo many Ages have put these Epistles upon the same foot of Authority with the others which had been univerfally receiv'd, but that all ground of doubting was by Degrees removed, and every Church had received full Satisfaction that they were written by the inspired Persons whose Names they bore, or to whom they were ascribed. We find this to be the Case in the fourth Century, when these were received in the Greek Church as of divine Authority

Authority by the Council of Laodicea; and forty Years after, the same was solemnly declared to be the Sense of the Latin Church in the Decretal Epistle of Innocent I. which was also consirmed eighteen Years after by a publick Decree of the Council of Carthage.

But long before these solemn and general Recognitions of their Authority, they had been received as genuine and authentick by many Churches as well as Writers. So \* Eusebius says of them all, 'That however they were reckoned among the doubtful Books, they were acknowledged by many.'

But to descend to particulars. The same Eusebius says of the Epistle of St. James, That it was publickly read in very many Churches, together with the others. And two peculiar Reasons may be assigned why it was thought spurious by some, and doubtful by others, and not sooner received by all; one, that the it is expressly under the name of James, yet there being more Persons of that name spoken of in the

New Testament, a Dispute arose to which of them it ought to be ascribed; and the other, that what he fays of the Necessity of Works in order to justify Men in the Sight of God, seemed to contradict what St. Paul had delivered concerning Justification by Faith alone. And St. Paul's Episses being universally received, they who believed or suspected that contrariety in Doctrine, must reject the other of course, or at least suspend their Opinion about it. But as those Doubts vanish'd in particular Churches, and it appeared that St. Paul and St. Fames were so far from contradicting each other, that one meant the No-neceffity of observing the Ceremonial Law, and the other the Necessity of observing the Moral Law; the one, That Works of what kind soever, without Faith, are ineffectual to Salvation, and the other, That Faith without Works cannot fave; no scruple was made of putting it upon the fame Foot with the other Epistles, in point of Authority. I Eusebius says, that not many of the Ancients mentioned it; and their Silence is already accounted for: but 2 7e-

Euseb. 1. 2. c. 23. 2 Jerom de Jac.

Degrees, and we find it currently cited, like other Scriptures, by the Fathers of the fourth Century, and particularly by ferom himself, as written by fames the Apostle, and the Brother of our Lord: So that in the Words of a learned Commentator, 3 They that doubted of it before, did in the fourth Century embrace the Opinion of those that received it; and from thence no Church nor Ecclesiastical Writer ever doubted of it; but on the contrary, all the Catalogues of the Books of Scripture, whether publish'd by General or Provincial Councils, &c. number it among the Canonical Scriptures.

The Second Epistle of St. Peter has been already observed to be one of those which also were acknowledged by many as genuine. And this shews, that when it is said by him that the ancient Fathers acknowledged but one Epistle of St. Peter, i. e, the First, it must be meant, Univerfally and without Exception; with reference

Mill. Proleg. p. 24.

3 — Contra Jovin. c. 24.

—1. 3. c. 3. —1. 6. c. 25.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Jerom Ep. ad. Paul. <sup>4</sup> Euseb. I. 3. c. 25.

to the Second, which was not so acknowledged. St. I ferom grounds this Doubt concerning the fecond Epistle, upon the difference from the first in point of Style. But this is true, in strictness, of the second Chapter only, which is as different in Style from the first and third Chapters, as it is from the first Epistle; being, as to the Matter of it, manifestly taken from some Tewish Book, which gave an Account of the Scoffers before the Flood who derided Noah's Prediction of it, and applied by St. Peter to the false Teachers who were crept in among the Christians, and derided their Expectation of Deliverance from the Perfecutions they were under, grounded upon what our Saviour and his Apostles had told them concerning the Judgments that were to come upon the Jewish Persecutors. As to the Style of that fecond Chapter, it is throughout lofty and pompous; and in that respect different from the Style of the other two. But is this a Suggestion fit to be oppos'd to the many Testimonies of its being St. Peter's, viz. Its bearing the Name of Simon Peter, by

which he is fo frequently spoken of in the Gospels. 'The express mention it makes of a former 1 Epistle he had written to them, and the visible Connection between the two Epistles (the Second being written to arm the Christians against the Uneafiness they were under, upon the Delay of that Deliverance which the first had promis'd:) The mention he makes of his approaching Dissolution, \* Knowing that shortly I must put off this my Tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ bath shewed me; which probably relates to what our Saviour intimated to St. 3 Peter of the time of his giving Testimony to the Gospel by his Death, that it should be before the Destruction of Ferusalem; and the express mention of what he beard and faw at the \* Transfiguration on the Mount, where none of the Disciples were with Christ, except Peter, Fames, and John. To all which it must be added. That there is a fair Presumption of its being written by an Apostolical Person, from his using the Style of our beloved Brother 5 Paul; and we don't find

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 1. <sup>2</sup> 2 Pet. i. 14. <sup>3</sup> John xxi. 22. 4 2 Pet. i. 16, 17, 18. Matt. xvii. 1. <sup>5</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 2, 15.

it was ever ascrib'd to any other of that Character. So far from this, that St. 1 Ferom, who takes Notice of the Difference in Style as the Foundation of the Doubts concerning it, folves the Difficulty, not by denying this Epiftle to be St. Peter's, which could not be deny'd for the Reasons above mentioned, but by supposing, that in the two Epistles they were two different Hands who express'd his Sentiments in Greek. Whether this was fo, or not; it shews that in St. Ferom's Opinion, the Arguments for its being St. Peter's could not be got over; and in this Opinion, the Writers of that and the following Ages, both in the Eastern and Western Church, concur with great Unanimity.

The Objection, and the only Objection, against receiving the Epistle of St. 3 Judge at first, was his citing the Prophecy of E-noch; but it is really hard to find where the Force of the Argument lies, That because an Apostle cites out of another Book (tho' we suppose it Apocryphal) a Passage

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Jerom in the Word Petrus, and Ep. ad. Hedib. qu. 11. <sup>2</sup> Mill. Proleg. p. 25. <sup>3</sup> Jerom. Catal. Jude. Jude 14, 15.

very good in itself and very apposite to his Purpose, therefore he could not be the Author of the Writing into which the Citation is grafted; tho' such Writing bears his Name, and is confirmed to be His by ancient Authority, as in this Case it is by the Joint Testimonies of Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, and Origen, who expressly cite it as St. Jude's; wherein also there is a great Unanimity among the Writers of the succeeding Ages, both Greek and Latin.

The SECOND and THIRD Epiftles of St. John, are so far from being liable to the Objection of a difference in Style from the first, which was universally received as his; that the manner of writing is remarkably the same in all the three; and of the thirteen Verses which makes the whole second Epiftle, several are manifestly the same in Sense, and some word for word. None of the three are under the Name of St. John, and in that respect the two last are of equal Authority with the first; but the second

J. 3. c. 8. Orig. Comm. in Matth, Tom. 11. p. 223. Mill. Proleg. p. 25.

and third are written under the Style of Elder, which peculiarly fuits the Age as as well as the Character of St. John, who was: above ninety Years old when they were written, and had the Direction and Government of all the Affatick Churches. Confidering how very fhort these two Epifiles are, and that feveral things contained in them are also to be found in the first Epistle, it is not to be expected that many Citations out of them should be met with in the Writers of the Church, either Ancient or Modern. But it so falls out, that: Trenœus in the second Century cites three Verses word for word, out of the second Epistle, under the Name of John the Disciple of our Lord; and, that no Doubt may remain whether he might not mean John the Presbyter, whom we find mention'd in 2 Eufebius as one of Christ's Disciples, or any other John but John the Apostle and Evangelist; he cites two other Passages tothe very same Purpose, one taken out of the first Epistle and the other out of the Gospel of St. John, and all the three as.

<sup>2 2</sup> John 7, 8, 11. Irenæus l. 1. c. 13. §, 2. ... -1. 3. c. 18. 2 Eufeb. l. 3. c. 39,

taken out of the Writings of one and the fame Person. ' Clemens Alexandrinus, citing a Passage out of the first Epistle, calls it his larger Epistle; which supposes one, at least, that was not so large. Dionyfius Alexandrinus, contending for an Opinion he had entertain'd that 2 St. John was not the Writer of the Apocalypse, makes it one Argument, that the Name is fet to the Apocalypse, whereas no Name is fet to the fecond or third Epistle, which he fays were then usually ascribed to him. And Origen, where ce tells us that all did not receive these two Epistles, implies that the greatest part did. The Occasion of writing them is supposed with great probability to have been, the Report made of the Liberality of the Elest Lady and of Gaius, by certain Persons whom St. John had recommended to the Churches of Afia for the furtherance of the Gospel; and these Acknowledgments of the Liberality of each, must come from one and the same hand, namely, that upon whose Recommendation it was bestowed.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Clem. Alex. Strom. I. 2. <sup>2</sup> Eufeb. I. 7. c. 25. <sup>3</sup> Circ. An. 260. Eufeb. I. 6. c. 25. Mill. Proleg. p. 18.

Altho' the Book of REVELATIONS is of a different Nature from the Epistles, as relating more to the State of the Christian Church in future times, than to the Doctrines at first deliver'd to it; yet because it is part of the New Testament, and one of the Books about which Doubts have been rais'd, whether or no they were written by the Persons whose Names they bear; I will here lay down the many cogent Reasons there are for concluding it to have been written by St. Fohn the Apostle and Evangelift, and not by any other. In the first Verse, it is called ' The Revelation of Jesus Christ to bis Servant John, and at the ninth Verse it is said, I John was in the Isle that is called Patmos for the Word of God and for the Testimony of Jesus Christ. Now 2 Eusebius, speaking of the Persecution of the Christin ans by the Emperor Domitian, mentions St. John the Apostle and Evangelist as then banish'd to the Isle of Patmos. The same is mention'd by 3 Tertullian; and 4 Clemens Alexandrinus speaks of his Return from thence to Ephesus after the Death of Domi-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 1, 9. <sup>2</sup> Euseb. l. 3. c. 18. <sup>3</sup> Tertult. de Præscrip. c. 36. <sup>4</sup> Euseb. l. 3. c. 23.

tian; and there is no Pretence that any other John was banish'd to that Island. I Justin Martyr, in his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew, expresly ascribes it to John, one of the Apostles of Christ. \* Irenaus mentions it as the Revelation of John the Disciple of our Lord; and that he meant St. John the Apostle and Evangelist, appears from what he tells us concerning the time when this Revelation was made to him, viz. about the 3 latter end of the Reign of Domitian, which was the time when he was in the Island of Patmos; and yet more \* clearly, by telling us it was the Disciple who lean'd. upon Jesus's Bosom at Supper. 5 Tertullian also cites it expresty under the Name of John the Apostle; and 6 Origen, where he speaks of the Banishment of John the Brother of James into that Island, speaks also of the Revelation there made to him, and cites the Book under his Name. Likewifethe Style given by the Ancients to the Writer of this Book, and affixt to the Titleof it, I mean, 7 The Divine, is usually sup-

pos'd to refer to the first Verse of St. John's Gospel, in which he afferts the Divinity of Christ.

In these Authorities there are several Circumstances which give a peculiar Force to them in the present Point. In general, what they fay, is deliver'd without the least Mark of Doubt or Hesitation. And as to the particular Writers, 2 Irenœus was the Disciple of Polycarp, and Polycarp of St. John; and he tells us, he had a Passage in this Book explain'd to him by those who had feen John Face to Face. Justin Martyr was converted to the Christian Faith within thirty-eight Years after the Writing of the Apocalypse, and within fifty-four Years from that Time he wrote his Dialogue with Trypho the Jew. Those several Fathers who give Testimony to the Authority of the Apocalypse as written by John the Apostle and Evangelist, did not all dwell in Asia, but in several other Parts of the World, whose Sense they may be presum'd to speak, as well as their own: Irenaus at Lions in Gaul, Clemens and Origen in Egypt, and Tertullian in Africa.' And it is a poor

<sup>×</sup> Θεδς δ λόγ. 2 Iren. 1. 5. c. 30. Evalion

Evasion of the Authority of those ancient Writers, to alledge that some of them had their peculiar Notions about other Points; as if a Singularity of Opinion in this or that Doctrine, could render them incompetent Witnesses to a Matter of Fact, which they had so good Opportunity to know.

Their Authority is further strengthened by this, 't that there is no Ground or Colour of the two Conjectures of the Apocalypse being written by John the Presbyter, or by Cerinthus. There is no Pretence to say, that the first was banish'd into the Isle of Patmos; and, as to the second, his Principles, 'That Christ was a meer Man, and, 'That he was not to rise from the dead till the general Resurrection, are directly contrary to the Doctrine of the Apocalypse'; and, moreover, bis millenary State, was not the Life of Saints, as the Apocalypse represents it, but the Life of Libertines.

That there were fo few Copies taken of this Book, in Comparison of the other Books of the New Testament, was owing

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Euseb. 1. 3. c. 28. Ibid. 1. 7. c. 25. <sup>2</sup> Rev. i. 5, 7, 8, 11. —xxi. 6. —xxii. 13.

to the subject Matter of it, which was very obscure, and related not so much to the past or present, as to the future 1 State of the Christian Church, in which the generality of Christians were not directly concern'd. For this Reason, it was not join'd at first to the Evangelical or Epistolary Canon, but was confider'd as a Writing by itself, and of a different Nature from the rest; neither was it directed to be read publickly in the Church, because of its Obscurity, and the little Relation it had to the Gospel State in those Days. And this, together with the 2 time when it was written, accounts for the Silence of the most early Fathers concerning it, and for its being omitted in some of the Catalogues of the Books of Holy Scripture, particularly that of the Council of Laodicea; the Defign of which Council was to enumerate such Books as were to be read publickly in the Church, as appears by the express Words of the Canon upon that Head.

The difference in Style from St. John's other Writings, and the mention of his

orig. Comm. in Matth. p. 220. Not before the Year 96.

Name here and not in the others, are also fairly accounted for by the difference of Subject; this being of the Prophetick Kind, and the Prophets usually prefixing their Names to the Accounts of the Visions and Revelations they had received from God; as we find in the Inflances of I Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and others. But notwithstanding the difference in Style, we may observe, in feveral Instances, a Coincidence in Expression between this and his other Writings; and this generally, in fuch Expressions as are not to be met with in the whole New Testament, except in the Gospel and Epistles of St. John. In the Revelations, it is said of Christ, that his Name is call'd, 3 The Word of God; and in the Gospel of St. . John he is styled 3 the Word, and in his first Epistle, 4 the Word of Life. In the Revelations, he is call'd the Lamb; and in the Gospel of St. John, 6 the Lamb of God. In the Revelations, the Name of

<sup>1</sup> Isai. i. 1. Jer. i. 1. Ezek. i. 3. Dan. vii. 2.
2 Rev. xix. 13. 3 John i. 1. 4 1 John i. 1.
3 Rev. v. 6, 12. 6 John i. 36.

Christ is, He that is true, - 2 He that is faithful and true; and in the Gospel of St. John, & He that is true - full of Truth, and the Truth. In the Revelations, 4 Manna is applied to spiritual Food; and so it is applied in the Gospel of St. John 5. In the Revelations it is faid from the Prophet Zechariah, Every Eye shall see him, and they also which pierced him; and in the Gospel of St. John, 'They Shall look on him whom they pierced. In the Revelations, Christ faith, 8 If any Man bear my Voice, and open the Door, I will come to bim, and sup with bim, and he with me: In the Gospel of St. John, If a Man love me be will keep my Words, and my Father will love bim, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.

Thus stands the Authority of this Book, upon the Foot of ancient Testimonies. But when the Doctrine of the Millenary State began to be advanced under the Notion of a State in which fensual Delights were to be enjoy'd in the greatest Perfection, and

9 John xiv. 23.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Rev. iii. 7. <sup>2</sup>—xix. 11. <sup>3</sup> John i. 14.—xiv. 6. <sup>1</sup> John v. 20. <sup>4</sup> Rev. ii. 17. <sup>5</sup> John vi. 32. <sup>6</sup> Rev. i. 7. <sup>7</sup> John xix. 37. <sup>8</sup> Rev. iii. 20.

the Authority of the Revelations was alledged, tho' very unjustly, in support of that carnal Doctrine; the Zeal of some Writers against this Doctrine, which was indeed exceeding wicked and corrupt, led them to raise Scruples about the Authority of the Book itself; which, tho' it "speaks of Christ's reigning a thousand Years with the Saints, gives not the least Ground to suppose that it will be a State of sensual Delights. On the contrary, it supposes the Members of that Kingdom to be Martyrs and other Holy Men who had preferved themselves from the Corruptions of the World. But after this Controversy was over, the Scruples vanished, and the Christian Church receiv'd it among the other inspir'd Writings, upon those ancient Testimonies that it was the Work of St. John the Apostle and Evangelist; tho' not being fo proper as the rest to be read publickly in the Church, it might in that refpect be consider'd sometimes in a different Light from them.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Euseb. 1. 3. c. 28. Ibid. 1. 7. c. 25. Mill's Prol. p. 19. <sup>2</sup> Rev. xx. 4, 5. <sup>3</sup> Mill's Prol. p. 19.

This is not the only Instance, in which a particular Controversy has led Men in the Heat of Dispute, to call in Question the Authority of particular Books of Scripture, which they thought unfavourable to the Doctrine they had espoused: There are Instances of this kind, both ancient and modern. The Manichees, who held a monstrous Opinion that the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New, rejected St. Matthew's Gospel, on account of the References he makes to the Old Testament, which shew both to be the Difpensations of one and the same God, and both to center in the Meffiah. The Ebionites, who in some fort received the Faith, but yet were zealous for the Mosaical Law, admitted no Gospel but that of St. Matthew, as written particularly for the use of the Hebrews. The Alogi (or Deniers of the Logos) finding it impossible to reconcile their Doctrine to the Gospel of St. John, and yet not venturing to except against the Authority of an Apostle, had no way left, but to deny that he was the Writer. The Latin Church, as I have already observed,

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finding themselves press'd by some Passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews in favour of the Novatian Doctrine against the receiving of lapsed Penitents, shew'd too great an Inclination for some time, to cherish Doubts concerning the Author of that Epistle. And in later Days, it is well known, that the Antinomians, and others who have carried the Doctrine of Justification by Faith alone to too great a height, have also endeavoured to invalidate the Epistle of St. James, which makes Works also a necessary Condition of our being justified in the Sight of God.

But however serviceable it may have been thought to the Advocates for this or that peculiar Tenet, to raise Doubts about the Authority of this or that Epistle, as particularly relating to the Dispute then in Hand; yet those Doubts can be of no Service to the Cause of Insidelity, as long as the Truth of the Christian Religion, and the general Doctrines of it, are supported by others, whose Writings have been universally received both as genuine, and as of divine Authority.

See before, Page 259.

It appears by what has been faid upon this Head, ' That the Books of the New Testament were written by the Persons whose Names they bear, or to whom they have been afcrib'd, and that those Writings are divinely inspired; 'That the greatest Part of those Books have been unanimously received by all Christian Churches from the beginning; 'That the Reason why some were not received so soon as others, was, the Necessity of particular Churches having Satisfaction as to their being written by some Apostle, or inspired Person, and the Difficulty of obtaining fuch Satisfaction in fome Cases more than in others, by reason of distance of Place, or other Circumstances: 'That the Doubts which have arisen concerning some particular Books, have generally been the Doubts, not of Churches, but of Perfons, and have been grounded either upon the want of express mention of the Writer's Name, or there having been two Perfons of the fame Name; both which Uncertainties are adjusted, and the Doubts arising from them fully cleared, by Testimonies ancient and uncontested; 'That the Differences of Style

Style are either imaginary, or fuch as the Differences in the Subjects and Occasions fairly account for; and are by no means of Weight enough to be opposed to the politive Testimony of ancient and authentick Writers; 'That those, and the like Arguments, weak and inconclusive in their Nature, have been generally laid hold on, on purpose to favour some Opinions which particular Persons had espoused, and which had no better Arguments to support them, and, ' That these having yielded to the Force of Truth for so many hundred Years, and the Writings of the New Testament having been so long received by the whole Christian Church as of Apostolical Authority, nothing more is needful to establish them as such, but to shew, that,

V. The Books of the New Testament, in which the Doctrines delivered by Christ and bis Apostles are contained, bave been faithfully Transmitted to the Christians of succeeding Ages. And, in general, it rests upon those who call in question the Fidelity of the Transmission in this Case, to shew that any other Book whatfoever has fuch and fo many plain and strong Testimonies of a faithful

faithful Transmission, as the New Testament; lest while their Zeal against Chriflianity drives them into groundless Cavils and Doubts about the Authority of those Books, they involve themselves in the Abfurdity of rejecting all ancient Writings whatfoever, as not only alter'd from the Originals, but alter'd to fuch a Degree as not to represent to us the genuine Meaning and Defign of their Authors. It is well known, how early the Christian Religion was carried into almost all Parts of the Roman Empire, into Regions and Countries very numerous and very distant from one another; and as Christianity spread, Copies of the New Testament spread with it, and not only remain'd in the Hands of Numbers of private Christians, but were publickly received and read in their religious Assemblies. So that if one Person had attempted to alter and corrupt his Copy, it would quickly have been discover'd by the rest; or if a whole Country had attempted it, the Copies throughout all other Countries would have been so many Testimonies of the Fraud. If therefore we could suppose the ancient Christians ever so much

inclined to alter and corrupt, none of them could have attempted it with the least Probability of Success: And what render'd it yet more impracticable, was, the Appeal that might be made, upon any Suspicion of Forgery, to the Authentick Writings, remaining and kept with the greatest Care in the Archives of feveral Churches that had been planted by the Apostles; to which 'Tertullian expresly refers in his Reasonings against the Hereticks of those Times, as then in being, and to be freely consulted. But what should tempt or incline the first Christians to corrupt Books that contained those Truths, on which they grounded all their Hopes, and for which they were ready to facrifice their Lives? Books, which they kept with fo much Care, and held facred to fuch a Degree, that if any Christian happened to be perfuaded by Threatnings and Cruelties to deliver them up to the Heathen Persecutors, they were put under the severest Penance by the Church; and we know fome chose to die rather than deliver them. Many Passages also cited out of those Books 1 Tertuli, de Præscript, adv. Hæreticos.

are found in the most early Writers of the Church, which appear to be the fame that we now have in our printed Copies. Controversies arose in the Church as early as the fecond Century; and as both Sides appeal'd to those Writings, so if either had changed and corrupted them, the Cheat must have been discover'd, and the Authors of the Corruption expos'd by their Adversaries; they who were concerned in those Controversies being many of them Persons who wanted neither Learning nor Penetration. The fame Writings were early translated out of the Greek into other Languages (Syriack, Latin, &c.) between which and the Original Greek there is the greatest Agreement in Sense and Matter. Add to all this, That many ancient written Copies, of those early Translations, and also of the original Greek, have been preferved to our own Times, and procured by learned Men out of the feveral Countries in Europe, Asia, and Africa, where Christianity was planted in the most early Ages; and fuch Copies have been found, upon the exactest Collation, to agree with those that are now us'd in the Christian Church.

Church, with much less Variation than is allow'd, in all other Writings, to be fairly plac'd to the Mistakes and Oversights of Transcribers.

For as to the Objection from the great Number of various Readings which have been found upon comparing those Copies. it is of no manner of Weight. It is indeed fairly prefum'd, that the Providence of God would preferve inspir'd Writings. which were intended for the perpetual Instruction of the Church, pure and uncorrupt, as to the Dostrines contained in them; but it is not pretended that the Transcribers of those Writings were fecur'd by any extraordinary Interposition of Providence, from every the least Error in copying them. It was necessary that the Books themselves should be written under the immediate Direction of the Holy Spirit, because the Things to be deliver'd in them were above the Reach of natural Reason, and nothing less than divine Inspiration could make them a perpetual Rule to the Church. But the faithful Transmission of them to future Ages might be fufficiently prov'd, upon the fame Foot, and in the fame manner as the

the faithful Transmission of any other ancient Writings. So that it rests upon those who urge this Argument against the Books of the New Testament, to shew that those various Readings do at all affect the Doctrines of Christianity, or that fuch Variety in any one Place renders any one Doctrine doubtful, that is not fully and clearly delivered in other Parts of the New Testament. On the contrary, I believe it may be fafely affirm'd, that every fingle Copy would exhibit a true and just Account of Christianity; where there is an honest Difposition to learn, and (in order to that) to correct the Errors of Transcribers, by comparing Places of the same Import and Tendency with one another; making the ufual Allowances for ordinary Slips of the Pen.

the New Testament, as they have been publish'd from Time to Time by learned Men, should be granted to be greater than in other ancient Writings, as they are not; there are two Things that would plainly account for it: The first, that the Copies which were taken of this Book before the

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Use of Printing, infinitely exceeded in Number the Copies of any other ancient Book whatfoever; and the more the Copies are, the more numerous of course will the various Readings be: The fecond, that no ancient Writings whatfoever have been examin'd with the same Care, and the Copies collated with the like Exactness, and the various Readings fet down even to a Difference as to Syllables, Letters, and Order of Words, as has been done in those of the New Testament; which greatly increases the Number of Readings, of how little Importance soever most of them may be. But at the same time, it is very certain that the Number of Copies greatly firengthens the Authority of the Books, both by the Agreement of fuch vast Numbers fetch'd from all Parts of the World (just Allowance being made to the accidental Slips or Mistakes of Transcribers, which cause no material Alteration either in Sense or Doctrine,) and by the Light arising from the Concurrence of many Copies (fuch especially as are ancient) in one and the same Reading, by which we are enabled to determine the true Reading upon a fure

a fure Foundation. On the other hand, when the Copies are few, the Errors of Transcribers in many Cases are not to be fet right upon any other Foundation than mere Conjecture. This is the general Sense of learned Men, as being evidently founded upon Reason and Experience; and it appears to be fo, from the great Endeavours that are used by all such as undertake to give correct Editions of ancient Authors, to procure as many written Copies as they can; and it also appears to be true in Fact, that where the Copies were few, Editions have been very faulty and imperfect; where many, very correct and accurate; and in both Cases more faulty or more correct, in proportion to the Number of Copies, fuch especially as are of greatest Antiquity; in which Respect, as well as in the Numbers both of Copies and Translations, the New Testament has vaftly the Advantage of all other ancient Writings whatfoever.

VI. The Dostrines of the Apostles, contain'd in their Epistles and in the Acts, together with what is taught by our Saviour in the Gospels, were design'd to be a standing

Rule of Faith and Manners to Christians in all Ages, and were from the Beginning confider'd and receiv'd as such by the Churches

of Christ.

That those Writings were Design'd to be a standing and perpetual Rule of Faith and Manners, appears from what has already been prov'd; that is, from the Instruction, Commission, and Inspiration, which the Apostles received from Christ, together with the Power of working Miracles in proof of their Commission from him: And all this, in order to their declaring and opening to Mankind the whole Gospel Dispensation, and every Part of it, and their perpetuating the Knowledge of it throughout all Generations to the End of the World. These were full and sufficient Declarations of the Will of Christ, That the whole Dispensation of his Gospel should be open'd by them, and be received by the World as coming from him, who had thus instructed and enlighten'd them, and effectually fecur'd them against Error and Mistake, and commission'd them to act in his Name, and ratify'd that Commission by Miracles, that no Doubt might remain but that

that they were fent by him on purpose to make a full and clear Discovery of that Dispensation to the World. And the neceffary Consequence of this is, in the first Place. That whatever they deliver'd concerning the Dostrines and Duties belonging to that Dispensation, was to be receiv'd by all Christians as properly coming from Christ; and then, That no other Persons having been inspir'd and commission'd to publish the Will of Christ, but the Apostles only, what they publish'd was the whole of what he intended to be publish'd. The contrary Suppositions plainly carry in them some one or more of these Absurdities, That Christ granted a Commission, without full Instructions for the Discharge of it; That Persons who acted under the Guidance of the Holy Ghoft, did not difcharge it faithfully; and, That all the while he was confirming their Doctrine by Miracles, he left them liable to Error. The Inference from all which would be, That he came down from Heaven to establish a new Religion, and impower'd special Messengers to publish it to the World, but yet left Mankind to the End of the World World under an Uncertainty what his Re-

ligion was.

The Apostles, to give their Writings the Authority which justly belong'd to them, generally declare themselves in the Beginning of their Epistles to be the Apofiles and Servants of Jesus Christ, that is, Persons sent by him, and specially employ'd in his Service; and in other Parts of the Epiftles, to the same Effect, the Ambassadors, the Stewards, and the Ministers of Christ; all which Expressions imply, that they were the Persons he had appointed to convey his Will to Mankind, and to dispense to them the great Truths of the Gospel, which till then were unknown to the World. I Let a Man so account of us as of the Ministers of Christ and Stewards of the Mysteries of God. - 2 By whom we have received Grace and Apostleship, for Obedience to the Faith among all Nations for his Name. And the same Apofile, speaking particularly of the Redemption wrought for us by Christ, and our Reconciliation to God by his Death, adds,

<sup>1</sup> Cor. iv. 1. 2 Rom. i. 5.

And bath given to us the Ministry of Reconciliation, to wit, that God was in Christ reconciling the World unto himself, not imputing their former Trespasses unto them, and bath committed unto us the Word of Reconciliation: Now then we are Ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. And elsewhere, upon the same Subject, 2 There is one God and one Mediator between God and Man, the Man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a Ransom for all, to be testified in due Time: Whereunto I am ordained a Preacher and an Apostle, a Teacher of the Gentiles in Faith and Verity. And again. 3 The Minister of Fesus Christ to the Gentiles. ministring the Gospel of God; and, 4 I am made a Minister of Christ according to the Dispensation of God which is given to me, to fulfil (i. e. fully to preach) the Word of God.

Next, as to the Doctrines deliver'd, they are spoken of as the Commandments of God and of Christ. 5 The Things that I write unto you are the Commandments of the Lord; and the Gospel preach'd was the 6 Gospel of

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Cor. v. 18, 19, 20. <sup>2</sup> 1 Tim. ii. 5, 6, 7. Rom. xv. 16. <sup>4</sup> Col. i. 25. <sup>5</sup> 1 Cor. xiv. 37. <sup>6</sup> 2 Cor. ii. 12. 1 Theff. iii. 2.

Christ, and the Gospel of God; the glorious Gospel of the Blessed God, which, says St. Paul, was committed to my Trust. And the same St. Paul, writing to the Thessalcnians, says, When ye received the Word of God, which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the Word of Men, but as it is in truth the Word of God. But when, upon a particular Occasion, he deliver'd only his own private Sentiments, he expressy tells the Corinthians, I have no Commandment from the Lord, yet I give my Judgment.

Next, as to the Guidance and Direction under which their Doctrine was deliver'd, it has been already observed, That after the Apostles had received their Commission to declare and publish the Gospel to all Nations, they also received the Gist of the Holy Ghost, who should teach them all Things, and bring all Things to their Remembrance whatsoever Christ had said unto them, and being the Spirit of Truth, should guide them into all Truth. And so it is affirm'd by St. Peter of them all, that they preach'd the

7 - xvi. 13.

Rom. xv. 16. 2 Cor. xi. 7. 1 Theff. ii. 2, 8, 9.

2 1 Tim. i. 11. 3 1 Theff. ii. 13. 4 1 Cor. vii.
25, 40. 5 Page 241. 6 John xiv. 26,

Gospel with (or by) the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven; and it is faid of the particular Doctrine, of the Gentiles being Fellow-Heirs with the Jews, that 2 it was reveal'd to the boly Apostles and Prophets (in general) by the Spirit. It has also been before 3 observ'd particularly of St. Paul. that he receiv'd his Doctrine by immediate Revelation; and tho' he was not of the Number of those upon whom the Holy Ghost descended at the Feast of Pentecost, he declares in many Places of his Epiftles that he acted under the Guidance of the same Spirit: 4 We speak the Wisdom of God in a Mystery -the Things which God bath reveal'd unto us by his Spirit. - We have the Mind of Christ; - He therefore that despiseth, despisetb not Man but God, who bath also given unto us his Holy Spirit .- " We have received. not the Spirit of the World, but the Spirit which is of God, that we may know the Things that are freely given us of God; Which Things also we speak, not in the Words which Man's Wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost

teacheth.

<sup>1</sup> Pet. i. 12. 2 Ephef. iii. 5. 3 Page 251. 4 1 Cor. ii. 7, 10, 16. 5 1 Theff. iv. 8. 6 1 Cor. ii. 12, 13.

he will give them a Proof of Christ speaking in him; and describing the 2 Order in which the Dead are to rise again (viz. those who are dead, and those who shall be sound alive at the general Resurrection) he declares, This we say unto you by the Word of the Lord. And St. Peter affirms, 3 that what St. Paul had written to the Christians, was according to the Wisdom given unto him; and in the same Place he sets St. Paul's Epistles upon the same Foot with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, which the Jewish Converts, to whom St. Peter was writing, did most firmly believe to be inspired.

If it be faid that these are the Testimonies of Persons concerning themselves, it is again to be remember'd, that the Writers of the Epistles are the same Persons whom the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles testify to have been specially commission'd by Christ, and to have received from him the Gift of the Holy Ghost, and to have wrought many and great Miracles in his Name; and all this, on purpose to qualify

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. xiii. 1, 3. <sup>2</sup> 1 Theff. iv. 15. <sup>3</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 15. them

them for publishing his Gospel to the World, and to put it out of all Doubt that they were Ministers and Ambassadors sent by him, and that therefore entire Credit might be given to whatever they deliver'd in his Name, and their Doctrine be receiv'd by all Christians as a true and full Account of the Gospel Dispensation, or, in other Words, as a Divine Rule of Faith and Manners.

Accordingly, The Christians of the most early Ages, declared and asserted in the clearest manner, that the Writings of the Apostles were divinely inspired, and that, as such, they became of Course a Rule to all Christians. Clement, a Fellow Labourer of St. Paul, writes thus to the Corintbians: 'The Apostles deliver'dthe Go-

- ' fpel to us, from our Lord Jesus Christ,
- and Jesus Christ from God. Wherefore,
- · Christ was fent by God, and the Apostles
- by Christ. Having therefore receiv'd
- their Instructions, and being confirmed
- in the Faith by the Word of God and
- the Fulness of the Holy Ghost; they
- went forth, preaching that the Kingdom

<sup>1</sup> Clem. Ep. 1. ad Cor. §. 42, 47.

' of God was at Hand:' And he bids them consider the Epistle of the blessed Apostle Paul, which was affuredly fent to them by the affistance of the Spirit. Polycarp, the Disciple of St. John, says to the Philippians concerning St. Paul, Being present be taught you the Word of Truth with all exastness and soundness; and being absent, wrote an Epistle to you, which if you look into, you may be built up in the Faith that was deliver'd to you. . Theophilus of Antioch, in the fecond Century, calls the Evangelists the Bearers of the Spirit; and fays of the Prophets and Apostles, that they spoke by one and the same Spirit. 3 Irenaus, in the fame Century, fays, That the Scriptures were distated by the Word of God and his Spirit; and, 4 That one and the same Spirit preach'd in the Prophets, and publish'd in the Apostles. And he has one whole 5 Chapter, to shew that the other Apostles as well as Paul, had their Knowledge by Revelation from God. He particularly blames those as impious, who presum'd to say,

<sup>\*</sup> Polycarp. Ep. ad Philip. §. 3. 

\* Theoph. ad Autol. 1. 3. 

Iren. 1. 2. c. 47. 

Iren. 1. 3. c. 25. 

Iren. 1. 3. c. 13.

that the Apostles preach'd, before they had a perfett Knowledge of what they were to preach: For, fays he, " After our Lord was risen from the Dead, and they were endued by the Holy Ghoft with Power from on high, they were filled with all Truths, and had perfect Knowledge, and then went forth into the Ends of the World, publishing the good things which God hath provided for us, and preaching Peace from Heaven unto Men. <sup>2</sup> Justin Martyr, in the same Century, speaks of the Scriptures, as Writings full of the Holy Ghoft. In the next Century, 3 Clemens Alexandrinus fays, The Apostles might well be called Prophets and Righteous, one and the same Holy Spirit working in all; and fpeaking of the Prophets and Apostles jointly, he fays, 4 They had the mind of the Prophetick and Instructing Spirit fecretly reveal'd to them; and he calls the Apostles, in particular, Disciples of the Spirit. 5 Origen mentions the Gospels, as acknowledg'd to be of divine Authority by all Churches;

and

Iren. 1. 3. c. 1. <sup>2</sup> Justin Mart. Dial. with Try-pho. <sup>3</sup> Clem. Alex. Strom. 1. 5. <sup>4</sup> Clem. Alex. Strom. 1. 1. <sup>5</sup> Orig. in Joh. p. 4, 5. Philocal. p. 7, 11, 21, 30.

and speaking of the Inspiration of the Prophets, fays, That the same God inspir'd the Evangelists and Apostles; and he mentions those facred Books, as not of Men, but from the Inspiration of the Holy Ghost, by the Will of the Father thro' Jesus Christ; and says, There is no nothing in the Prophets, or the Law, or the Gospels, or the Apostles, (by which last is meant the Epistles) that is not from the Fullness of God; and, That there is an entire Harmony and Agreement between the Old Testament and the New, between the Law and the Prophets, between the Evangelical and Apostolical Writings, and between Apostolical Writings, with relation to one another; and both he and others frequently stile those Writings, The Oracles of God, and, The Voice of God.

What has been already said, and repeated, concerning the Commission which
the Apostles receiv'd from Christ for publishing his Gospel to the World, and his
enduing them for that End with the Holy
Spirit, and with the Power of working
Miracles; abundantly shews, that whatever they deliver'd concerning the Nature
of that Institution, and the Doctrines and

Duties

Duties properly belonging to it, was intended by Christ and his Apostles to be a fixt and perpetual Rule to the Christian Church. And as they intended it, fo the first Christians understood and receiv'd it. The 'Gospels were read in their Assemblies, as part of their publick Worship; The Exhortations of the Ministers deliver'd in the same Assemblies, were founded upon the Portions which had been read out of those Gospels; They began early to write Commentaries upon the Books of the New Testament, as upon a facred Text; and Controversies were finally determined by what should appear upon Examination to be the true Meaning and Tenor of those Books. Upon this Foundation it is, that 2 Irenaus attests the Truth of his own Doctrine against one of the Hereticks of that time; Let bim, fays he, examine what I have written, and he will find it consonant to the Doctrine of the Apostles, and exactly agreeable to what they taught. The same ancient 3 Writer speaks of what the Apofiles taught, as the Rule of Truth; and

Justin Mart. Apol. 2. 3 Iren. l. 3-c. 11, 12.

<sup>2</sup> Iren. 1. 3. C. 12.

calls the Gospels the Pillar and Foundation of the Church; and fays of the Apostles. That the Church throughout the World grounding themselves upon their Doctrine, persever'd in the felf-same Sentiments concerning God and his Son. And, We have not known the Methods of our Salvation from any others, than those by whom the Gospel came to us, which the Apostles preach'd, and afterwards, by the Will of God, deliver'd down to us in Writing, to be the Foundation and Pillar of our Faith. He 2 charges the Hereticks with perverting both the Evangelical and Apostolical Writings to fuch Senses as might favour their own Doctrines, and with affirming the things which neither the Prophets preach'd, nor Christ taught, nor the Apofiles deliver'd: and that while they went beyond the Scriptures, 3 they destroy'd the Bounds of Truth. And fo Tertullian; Take away from Hereticks their Pagan Doctrines, and let them refer their Questions to the Decision of the Scriptures, and they will not be able to stand. And elsewhere he cen-

bra Veritatis.

4 Tertull. de Refurrect. c. 3.

5 Tertull. de Præscrip. c. 15.

fures those as weak, who think they can discourse of Matters of Faith, otherwise than from the Books containing that Faith. To the same Purpose, 'Clemens Alexandrinus says, Let us not content ourselves with the Testimonies of Men, but let us consirm that which comes in Question by the Word of God, which is to be credited beyond all Demonstrations; or rather is itself the only Demonstration.

Whether therefore we confider, what the Commission was which the Apostles receiv'd from Christ, or what the Gifts and Powers, by which they were enabled to discharge it; what they declared concerning their Authority and the Doctrine they deliver'd, or what the first Christians believed and declared concerning them; In all and every of these Views, we see the clearest Evidence that the Matters and Doctrines contain'd in the New Testament, as coming from Persons who were commission'd and inspired by Christ to publish his Religion to the World, were defign'd to be a fixt and perpetual Rule to Christians in all future Ages. And they were in fact

receiv'd under that Character by the first Christians, and, after the Increase of the Gospel, by particular Churches, gradually. as these Churches came to a certain Knowledge of the feveral Books being written by Perfons divinely inspired; and in procels of time, by the whole Christian Church; upon a full and general Conviction, that they were the Writings of fuch Persons, and that there was no just or reasonable Ground of Doubt, either about the Books, or the Writers of them. And as I observ'd before, the Slowness and Caution of particular Churches in giving Affent, is one good Argument that they were faithful and impartial Witnesses. So unjust have been the Suggestions of some, who yet bore no ill Will to Christianity, That all the Books of the New Testament became authentick at once, by a folemn Act of the Church, and that it was the Authority of the Church that made them a Rule or Canon to all Christians. On the contrary, particular Books were receiv'd by particular Churches, fooner or later; according to the time of writing, and according to the different. Opportunities they had of coming

coming to the Knowledge of them, by reafon of the different Distance of Cities and Countries from one another, and the different Degrees of Correspondence among them. The Rule which determin'd them to admit the particular Books, was the Affurance they had, that they were written by Persons divinely inspir'd; and upon this (when it became clear to them upon due Enquiry and Examination, ) they grounded the Authority of each Book. From henceforth, Writers cited the Books in Confirmation of the Doctrines and Duties of Christianity, and the People consider'd them as a divine Rule of Faith and Manners; both which we see as early as we have any of their Writings. And when by degrees, every particular Church was fatisfied that all the Books were written by Persons divinely inspired, they publickly declared their Satisfaction in Councils occafionally affembled to regulate the general Affairs of the Church. The Books were not therefore authentick, because those Declarations were made, but the Declarations were therefore made, because the Books were authentick; the Church being confider'd der'd only as a Witness that they were written by the Persons whose Names they bear, and to whom they are ascrib'd, and from whose Inspiration they derive their Authority.

I am well aware, that in later Ages there have arisen Men who would confine the Christian Rule or Canon to the Writings of the Evangelists, and the Christian Faith to the fingle Article of believing Jesus to be the Meshab; this seeming to have been sufficient at first to gain Admittance into the Christian Church, and the Truth of that Proposition being abundantly attested by the four Gospels. But it was not rightly consider'd by those Men, how extensive that Article was, and how many more it included in it; the Affent to it being, in effect, an Acknowledgment that Jesus was the Son of God, and the Baptism received in vertue of that Assent, an embracing of the Doctrine of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost; and both the Affent and the Baptism, a general Profession of taking Christ for their Master; and that Profession, a general Engagement to conform to all the Doctrines and Rules which he should deliver, either by himself

or by Perfons whom he should commission to make further Declarations of his Will. So that the Admission into the Church by Baptism upon the Belief of that single Article, was properly the admitting Perfons into the School of Christianity, to be further instructed and built up in the Faith of Christ: and to consider such Admission in any other Light, is just as if one should argue that a Child is a complete Man, because he has all the Parts of a Man, and will by due Nourishment and Instruction grow up gradually to the Stature and Knowledge of a perfect Man. This is the Light in which the Apostles of our Lord consider'dit. St. Peter writing to the Christians dispers'd in several Parts of the World, directs them as new born Babes (as those who were yet tender and young in the Christian Faith) to desire the sincere Milk of the Word, that they may grow thereby. And St. Paul tells the Christians at Corinth to whom he spake as unto Babes in Christ. I have fed you with Milk, and not with Meat. for bitberto ye were not able to bear it. And when he reproves the Hebrews for their

D & 1 Cor. iii, 1, 2, 1 Pet. ii. 2,

flow Progress in the Knowledge of the Christian Faith, he tells them; When for the time ye ought to be Teachers, ye have need that one teach you again, which be the first Principles of the Oracles of God, and are become fuch as have need of Milk and not of strong Meat: For every one that uses Milk, is unskilful in the Word of Righteousness, for be is a Babe. But strong Meat belongeth to them that are of full Age, even those who by reason of use (in the Margin, it is Habit or Perfection) have their Senses exercis'd to difcern both Good and Evil. From whence he immediately infers, 2 Therefore leaving the Principles (or first Rudiments) of the Dostrine of Christ, let us go on unto Perfection, not laying again the Foundation of Repentance from dead Works, and of Faith towards God; of the Doctrine of Baptisms, and of laying on of Hands, and of the Resurrection of the Dead and of eternal Judgment.

A late ingenious Writer's, who has traced out the several Steps taken by Christ and his Apostles in the first Promulgation

2 Heb. vi. 1, 2.

Heb. v. 12, 13, 14. 2 Heb. vi. 1, 2.
3 Dr. Burnet, late Master of the Charter-House in bis Book De Fide & Officis, p. 117.

of the Gospel, had a true Notion of this, and calls the Proposition, That Jesus is the Messiah, the first Entrance and Initiation into the Christian Faith; and adds. That in the Progress of the Gofpel, the Apofiles explain'd the Heads of the Christian Faith more fully and openly, to the end that at length by their Preaching and Ministry the whole Will and Council of God might be manifested; that is, all things which ought to be believed and done to obtain eternal Life. And speaking of the Inspiration of the Apostles. he fays, The Holy Ghost was given them, not only to bring to their Remembrance whatever they had heard from Christ, but alfo, to add all fuch things as were necessary to fill up and complete the Christian Dostrine. He fays 2 further, That in the Acts of the Apostles we have the first Lineaments of a rising Church, and as it were the Groundwork of the Christian Faith; and afterwards. where 3 he describes the gradual opening of the Gospel, he takes Notice, that the Apofiles, to whom was committed the expounding of that new Revelation, deliver'd fome Doctrines sooner, and some later; and com-

Page 129. Page 121, Page 138. pares

pares the Growth of the Christian Dispenfation to that of a Flower, which opens itfelf gradually; and adds, that some of the Mysteries belonging to it, were more seasonably deliver'd after the first Seeds had taken root.

An ingenious \* Person, who at his first Transition from Enquiries merely rational to those of Revelation, set himself to reduce the fundamental Doctrines of Christiaanity to the narrowest Compass he possibly could, feems not to have confidered enough this gradual Opening of the Gospel Dispenfation, when he made that one Article · That Jesus is the Messiah,' the Belief of which was no more than the first Entrance into the Christian Faith, to be the whole of it; if he meant it in any other Sense than as it carried in it a general Acknowledgment, that they who made that Profession did thereby receive Christ for their Master, and were ready to embrace whatever Doctrines or Precepts should come from him, with a fincere Disposition to be instructed in them. And, in truth,

Page 139. Christianity,

<sup>\*</sup> Mr. Locke's Reasonableness of

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that he meant it in this Extent, and defigned no more than a speculative Enquiry about the Nature of Fundamentals, feems plain from what he adds, 'That as for the rest of Divine Truths, there is nothing more required of a Christian, but that he receive all the Parts of Divine Revelation with a Docility and Disposition prepared to embrace and affent to all Truths coming from God; and submit his Mind to what soever shall appear to him to bear that Character: This was all that could be required of the first Converts to Christianity, to whom the Gospel Dispensation was not yet opened; but it follows not from thence, that no more was necessary to be believed by Christians, after that Dispensation was fully opened: On the contrary, it follows, that an actual Belief of the Doctrines of the Gospel, after a full Declaration made of them, was as necessary to make Men Chriflians, as a Readiness and Disposition to receive them was before; and the way by which both approved themselves to be true and fincere Christians, was an honest Dispofition to embrace all the Light that was af-

> Page 300. P 3

forded

forded them, whether by Christ himself or by those whom he inspired and commissioned for the opening and publishing his Gospel to the World. And therefore the same Author speaking of the Apostles, and their Writings, fays, ' Thefe Holy Writers, inspired from above, writ nothing but Truth, and in most Places very weighty Truths to us now, for the expounding, clearing, and confirming of the Christian Doctrine. And in his later Years, when he had more maturely confidered the Frame and Tenor of the Gofpel Difpensation, he calls the Writings of the New Testament, without Distinction, & Holy Scripture, Holy Writings, the Sacred Text, Writings distated by the Spirit of God; and fays of the Writings of the Apostles, 3 That the Dostrines contained in them tend wholly to the fetting up the Kingdom of Jesus Christ in this World. Particularly, of St. Paul and his Epiftles, upon feveral of which he wrote a very ufeful and elaborate Commentary during his Retirement in his last Years, he says, That as to this Apostle, 4 he had the whole Dostrine of

Page 297.
Ibid. p. 22.

<sup>2</sup> Pref. to his Commentary.

the Gospel from God by immediate Revelation; that for his Information in the Christian Knowledge, and the Mysteries and Depths of the Dispensation of God by Jesus Christ, God himself bad condescended to be bis Instructor and Teacher; and that he had received the Light of the Gospel from the Fountain and Father of Light himself; and as to his Epistles, ' That they were dictated by the Spirit of God. In his Preface to the Commentary upon the Epistle to the Romans, after having enumerated some of the Particulars in which that Epistle opens the Gospel Dispensation to Mankind, he adds, These are but some of the more general and more comprehensive Heads of the Christian Dostrine to be found in this Epistle. The Design of a Synopsis will not permit me to descend more minutely to Particulars; but this let me fay, that he that would have an enlarged View of true Christianity, will da well to fludy this Epifle. To induce Men to the Study of the New Testament in general, he fays, 2 The only way to be preferved from Error, is to betake ourselves in earnest to the Study of the way to Salvation,

\* Ibid. p. 17. \* Ibid. p. 24.

in those Holy Writings wherein God bas revealed it from Heaven, and proposed it to the World; seeking our Religion where we are fure it is in truth to be found. And, in a Letter written the Year before his Death. to one who had asked him this Question, What is the shortest way to attain to a true Knowledge of the Christian Religion in the full and just Extent of it? His Anfwer is, Study the Holy Sripture, especially the New Testament; therein are contained the Words of eternal Life: It has God for its Author, Salvation for its End, and Truth without any Mixture of Error for its Matter. And of St. Paul's Epiflles, which he was more particularly led to speak of in the Preface to his Commentary, he fays, That the studying and understanding them aright, will make those who do it to rejoice in the Light they receive from those most useful Parts of Divine Revelation.

This Writer also furnishes us with an Answer to the Objection usually made by Insidels and Scepticks, That if the Epistles were written upon particular Occasions only, they would not have been written at all

if those Occasions had not happened, and that therefore the Christian Faith was completely delivered before, in the Gospels and the Acts of the Apostles. 'The Providence of God, says he, bath so order'd it, that St. Paul bas writ a great Number of Epiftles land the fame is true of those that were written by other Apostles] which the upon different Occasions, and to several Purposes, yet are all confined within the Business of his Apostleship, and so contain nothing but Points of Christian Instruction; amongst which he seldom fails to drop in and often to enlarge upon the great and distinguishing Dostrines of our Holy Religion. If the Writing of the Epiftles was ordered by the Providence of God, the same Providence certainly intended, that they should be a Rule and Direction to the Christian Church; and if the Providence of God had not fo ordered it, that the Epistles should be written, the same Providence would have found out some other way to open and explain the Christian Revelation in the Manner they have done. The Question therefore is not, what the State of things would have been if the

Pref. to Comment. p. 21.

Epistles had not been written (which no Mortal can tell,) but the only Question is, how the Matter stands, now they are written, and whether we are at Liberty to consider them otherwise than as Openings and Explanations of the Christian Doctrine, when they come from Persons divinely inspired and commissioned by Christ to publish his Gospel to the World; in virtue of which (as the other written before mentioned has truly said) they were enabled and empowered to add all such Things as were necessary to fill up and compleat the Christian Doctrine.

Whatever therefore we find in the Writings of the Apostles that concerns the Doctrine and Œconomy of the Christian Difpensation, whether it be further Explanations of what is more generally deliver'd in the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, or Additions to them; it is what they were empower'd by Christ and enabled by the Holy Ghost to deliver to the World, and so became a Rule of Faith and Practice to Christians to the End of the World. Such are these that follow; The Misery

Burn. de Fide, &c. p. 120.

brought upon Mankind by the Fall of Adam, and the Deliverance out of that Mifery as wrought for us by Christ: The Infufficiency of the Mosaical Law for obtaining Salvation: The typical Nature of the Ceremonial Law as prefiguring Christ, the End of that Law and our great Sacrifice, High-priest and Law-giver: The outsward Performances of the Ceremonial Law, represented as Emblems of inward Purity: The Excellency of the Sacrifice, Ministry, and Laws of Christ, beyond those of the Mosaical Dispensation: The Efficacy of the Death of Christ and of the whole Gospel Dispensation, for obtaining Pardon of Sin, Reconciliation to God, and Eternal Life: The Union of the divine and human Nature in Christ: The Necessityof his Incarnation, to be first a Teacher and Example, and after that to be capable of dying; of his Death, to take away Sin by the Sacrifice of himself; of his Resurrection, to prove his Conquest over Death. and to be an Earnest of our rising from the dead; and of his Ascension, to be vested with all Power in Heaven and Earth, and to be our Mediator, Advocate and Inter-P 6 ceffor ceffor at the Right-hand of his Father: The Universality and Sufficiency of the Grace promifed in the Gospel, decreed by God from the Foundation of the World. and revealed in due Time in the Gospel, for the Salvation of all true Believers: The Right of Gentiles as well as Jews, to be Partakers of the Mercies and Benefits of the Gospel Covenant in Christ: The Justice of God in rejecting the unbelieving Jews and calling the Gentiles: The Necessity of Faith in him, in order to our Justification in the Sight of God, and the Impossibility of obtaining Salvation in any other way than thro' the Atonement made by him: The Efficacy of Faith, and the Necessity of good Works, as the genuine Fruits of a true and lively Faith: The Sanctification of our Nature by the Spirit of God: The ordinary Operations and Influences of the Holy Spirit; and the Obligation to Love, Peace, Meekness, Gentleness, and mutual Forbearance, and the Fruits of the Spirit: The Power and Vigilance of our Enemy the Devil and his wicked Spirits; and the great Sinfulness of Envy, Detraction, Malice, Hatred and Revenge, as properly the Works Work's of the Devil: The Duty of doing all Things to the Glory of God, by employing our several Gifts and Talents for that End: The Duty of Repentance from dead Works, of dying to Sin and living to God, and of putting on the new Man, and living, not according to the Flesh but according to the Spirit: The Duties of Morrification and Self-denial, in order to the fubduing our inordinate Lusts and Appetites: The absolute Necessity of Holiness. and the utter Inconfistency of Uncleanness of all Kinds with the Purity of the Gofpel: The Duty of preferving the Bond of Marriage facred and inviolable: The Nature of the Church of Christ upon Earth. and the Communion of Christians with him as their Head, and with one another as Joint Members of his Body: The true Import, due Administration, and proper Efficacy of the Ordinances instituted by him: The Government of his Church, and the Appointment of Pastors and Teachers therein, to minister in holy Things, and to explain to the People the Doctrines of Christianity, and enforce the Duties of it: The Publick Worship and Discipline appointed

pointed in his Church, the first to be attended, and the second to be submitted to by all Christians: The Necessity of Union among the Members of Christ's Church. and the great Mischief of Divisions: The Duty of praying for the Wants of one another both spiritual and temporal: The due Regulation of religious Zeal, and the Danger of a misguided Zeal: The Duty of preaching, and taking up the Cross of Christ, and the Mischief of corrupting the Christian Faith by Philosophy and the Wildom of this World: The extreme Danger of Infidelity and Apostaly from the Faith: The distinguishing Reward of those who fuffer patiently for the Truth of the Gospel, and persevere unto the End: The Relation which good Christians bear to the Saints in Heaven, while they continue upon Earth: The great Happiness that is there laid up for all the faithful Servants of Christ: The Order of the general Resurrection, and the Changes that will be then made in the Bodies of good Men.

These and the like Heads of Doctrine and Instruction which are found in the E-pistles, being added to the Light which we

receive

receive from the Gospels and Acts of the Apostles, give us a compleat View of the Christian Dispensation and every Branch of it; the one being the Foundation, and the other the Superstructure, and both neceffary to build us up in the true Faith and Doctrine of Christ. And whether these be all equally necessary to be explicitly known and believed, or all equally fundamental, is an useless and idle Enquiry. Whoever reads the Writings of the Apoftles, and is persuaded that the Doctrines they delivered were received from Christ, or written by the Direction and Affistance of his Holy Spirit, cannot but think himfelf obliged to believe and do whatever he finds delivered in these Writings, and to confider them as a Divine Rule of Faith and Practice.

As to the Duties merely moral, and such as belong to our several Stations and Circumstances in this World, no Insidel has ever been so hardy as to deny that the Epistles contain a Variety of admirable Precepts and Directions for our Conduct and Behaviour in the several Relations of Life (for Magistrates and People, Wives and Husbands,

Husbands, Parents and Children, Masters and Servants,) and also in the several Conditions and Circumstances of Life, Riches and Poverty, Health and Sickness, Prosperity and Adverfity. Nor need I repeat here what I have shewn at large ' elsewhere. That these and the like Duties, as laid down and enjoined in those Sacred Writings, are not only carried to higher Degrees of Perfection than they ever were in the Schools of Morality, but also have far greater Weight here, as having the Stamp and Sanction of Divine Authority, and as they are enforced by Confiderations relating to our eternal Happiness in the next Life. and by Motives immediately refulting from our Relation to Christ, and from the general Doctrines and Principles of the Chriffian Faith.

It is true, that the immediate Occasion of several of the Epistles, was the correcting Errors and Irregularities in particular Churches and Countries. Such were 'The corrupting Christianity with Mixtures of Judaism and Philosophy, Apostasy from the Faith they had receiv'd, Contentions and

Second Past. Lett. p. 187.

Divisions among themselves, Neglect of the publick Affemblies and Misbehaviour in them, The despising of Government, The dishonouring of Marriage, The allowing Fornication, &c. And God knows our own times are a fad Instance of the Necessity of such Cautions in all Ages, and the no less Necessity of attending to the Duties which are directly opposite to those Vices and Irregularities, and which the Apostles take Occasion from thence to lay down and enforce. And even their Decifions of Cases concerning Meats and Drinks, and the Observation of the Ceremonial Law, and other like Doubts, which were peculiar, to the Jewish Converts in the first Occasion of them; these Rules also are, and always will be, our furest Guides in all Points relating to Christian Liberty, and the Use of things indifferent; when the Grounds of those Decisions, and the Directions consequent upon them, are duly attended to, and applied to Cases of the like Nature by the Rules of Piety and Prudence; or, as a learned Writer expresses it, By Analogy and Parity of Reason, those may be extended

-022 9 96 7 9 11 11 11 17 very profitably to the general Beboof and Advantage of other Churches of God, and particular Christians of all Ages; especially, in one Point which is of universal Concern in Life, I mean, The Duty of abstaining from many things which are in themselves innocent, if we foresee that they will give Offence to weak Christians, or be the Oc-

casion of leading others into Sin.

The Sum then of the 6th Head is this; That the Apostles were entrusted by Christ with the making a full and entire Publication of his Gospel, and inspired by the Holy Ghost, to enable them to discharge that Trust: That the Books of the New Testament were all written or approv'd by them; ' That Christians in all Ages have thought themselves obliged to confider and understand the Nature of the Gospel Dispensation, as they found it explain'd by Persons thus authoris'd and inspir'd: and, 'That as soon as the several' Books of the New Testament appear'd upon clearand evident Proof to be written by the Persons whose Names they bore, all Christian Churches receiv'd them as Inspir'd'

The Gofpels of Mark and Luke. See p. 220. Writings,

# PASTORAL LETTER. 347. Writings, and as a Divine Rule of Faith and Manners.

The Inference from all this, which every one who is a Christian in earnest ought to make to himfelf, is, To consider it as his indispensable Duty to peruse and attend to those facred Books, as explaining to him the Terms of Salvation according to the Gospel Covenant, and acquainting him with the Conditions requir'd on his Part in order to obtain it. And because the Books of the Old Testament are also the Oracles of God deliver'd from time to time to the Jewish Nation, and are declar'd by the New Testament to be written by divine Inspiration, and do contain in them many excellent Lessons of Duty, and a great Variety of Mercies and Judgments fent upon Men and Nations according to their Obedience or Disobedience to the Commands of God, and also the Accounts of God's Communications with Mankind, and his Dealings with them, from the Creation of the World; together with a Treasure of Devotions and Meditations of all kinds and for all Conditions, especially in the Book of Pfalms: Let me therefore further intreas

you, carefully to peruse those sacred Writings; frequently and feriously meditating upon the various Providences and Difpenfations of God to Men, and learning from thence to praise and adore his Power, Wisdom, Justice and Goodness, and to be careful above all things to recommend yourselves to his Favour and Protection by a strict and uniform Obedience to his Laws. What St. Paul fays of ' Timothy, is a high Commendation of him: From a Child thou bast known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make thee wife unto Salvation through Faith which is in Christ Jesus: And then he adds, All Scripture is given by Inspiration of God, and is profitable for Doctrine, for Reproof, for Correction, for Instruction in Righteousness: That the Man of God may be perfect, throughly furnish'd unto all good Works. And as God a bas caus'd all Holy Scriptures (both of the Old and New Teftament) to be written for our Learning, as the 3 Liturgy of our Church expresses it; be you always careful, that (in the Words of the same Liturgy) you do in such wife

<sup>2</sup> Tim. iil. 15, 16, 17.
2 Collect for second Sunday in Advent.

bear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them, that by Patience and Comfort of his holy Word, you may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed Hope of everlasting Life, which he hath given us in our Saviour Jesus Christ.

#### To CONCLUDE.

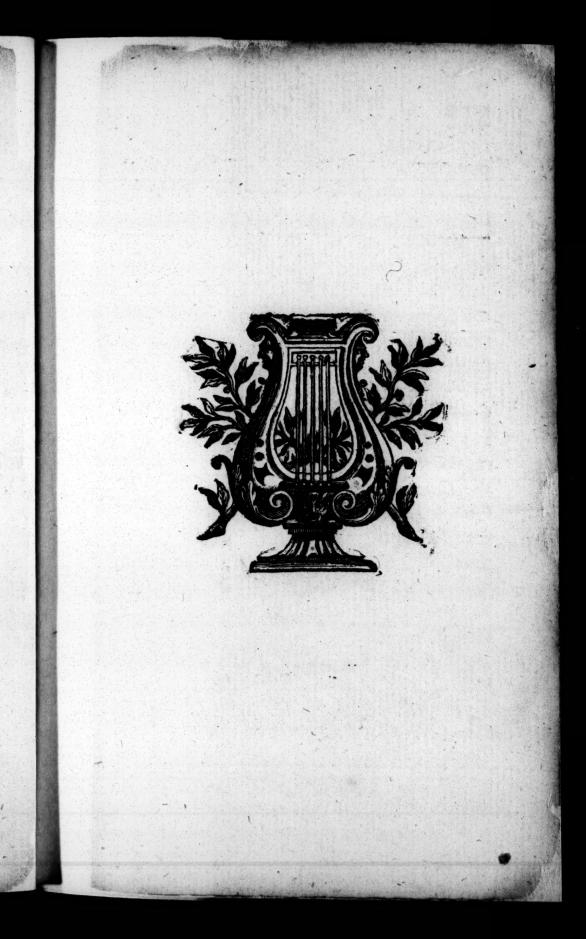
In this and my two former Letters, I have given you a View of the Christian Religion, and the Evidences of the Truth of it, in as short a Compass, and in the plainest Manner, I was able; with an Eye, throughout, to the present Attempts of Infidels against our common Faith, and with a fincere Defire to preserve you from the Infection, and to Establish you in that Faith. I have shewn you, 'That the Reveal'd Will of God is your only fure Guide in the Way to Salvation; 'That a full Revelation of his Will, concerning the Methods and Terms of your Salvation, is contain'd in the Writings of the New Testament; " That those Writings are genuine and authentick, and have been faithfully transmitted to us; and, ' That if you neglect the

the Means of Salvation which God has appointed, and feek for it in any other Way, you will not only fail of it in the End, but likewise render yourselves inexcusable in his Sight. I befeech you therefore to weigh and confider what I have written for your Use, with such Seriousness, Attention, and Impartiality, as the Importance of these things most manifestly requires and deserves; and to take great Care that your Enquiries after Truth be wholly free from the Influences of Profit or Pleasure, Pride or Passion, and from all Views and Considerations whatfoever, except a fincere Defire and Intention to Know and Do the Will of God, in order to secure your eternal Salvation. And, that in the Pursuit of this great Work, your own Endeavours may be ever accompanied with the divine Direction and Affistance, is the hearty and earnest Prayer of,

10.JY60

Your faithful Friend, and Pastor,

Edm', London's



10 JY60

